MECCANIA
THE SUPER-STATE
OWEN GREGORY

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BY

OWEN GREGORY

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27/10/19

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published in 1918

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INTRODUCTION

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MR. MING AND HIS JOURNAL

AS this book is little more than a transcript of a document originally written in the form of a journal by a man who, until about a year ago, was an entire stranger to me, and as the document itself contains not a few statements which make large demands upon the credulity of the average reader, it seems necessary to offer some explanation regarding both the journal and its author, Mr. Ming—or, to give him his full name, Ming Yuen-hwuy.

If I were able to go bail for Mr. Ming and assure the British Public that he was an entirely credible and impartial witness, the book might have stood on the same foundation as other volumes of ‘revelations’ concerning a country with which Englishmen are still insufficiently acquainted. But I cannot go bail for Mr. Ming. The chief source of my knowledge of him is the journal itself. It has even been suggested to me that Mr. Ming did not write the journal, but must have stolen it from some European, probably an Englishman. On this point I shall have something to say presently. Perhaps the best solution of these difficulties will be to say what I know of the origin of the book.

Mr. Ming was introduced to me, by a friend whose name it is unnecessary to give, in November or December 1917. My friend said he remembered meeting him in London as far back as 1909. Since then, however, Mr. Ming had not only lived in London and travelled throughout England, but had also spent about two years in France and Italy, and had visited America. What his previous career had been I do not know, nor did my friend know. He appeared always to have plenty of money, and we surmised that he might have been attached in some way to the Chinese Legation; but he never gave the least hint about any such connection. What I do know is that he had a remarkable knowledge of our language, and a remarkable familiarity with our laws, customs and political institutions. He professed a great admiration for our British Constitutions, a circumstance which may account for some of the political views to which he gives expression in his journal.

A day or two after he had been introduced to me I invited him to dinner and on this occasion we found much to talk about—chiefly European politics. At length, after we had finished a bottle of wine and a liqueur or two, he remarked that of all the countries he had visited in Western Europe he had been most impressed by Meccania. (He pronounced the word '*Mek-kah'-nia.*')

My knowledge of Geography is not complete, I admit, but I thought I knew all the countries of Western Europe (the war has helped wonderfully to fill up certain gaps). I replied that I had never heard of such a country.

"Probably not," he answered. "But it exists. And the proof of it is that I spent some five months there in 1970, and kept a journal of my experiences."

"You mean 1870," I said.

"No, 1970," he replied.

I hardly knew whether he were experimenting upon my sense of humour, or had got confused between Chinese and European chronology; or whether the liqueur had gone to his head. Possibly—and here I became a little nervous—he was a little 'abnormal.' "Anyhow," he said, "one of my chief objects in seeking an interview with you was to consult you about publishing this journal."

We were dining in my chambers and he begged permission to fetch his hand-bag from the anteroom. He returned with a bulky manuscript. I wondered if he were hard up and wanted to draw me into some sort of bargain, but I reflected that he seemed to be a much wealthier man than I. He said he was convinced that his journal was an important contribution to political literature, and would be found of interest not only in Great Britain but in France and America as well. It would be a good thing also if the Meccanians themselves could read it. Unfortunately there was no chance of that, he said, because nothing was read in Meccania except by permission of the Government. He went on to explain that the journal had been kept partly in English, partly in Chinese and partly in Meccanian; but that he had since written a rough translation of the whole in English. His knowledge of English, though sufficient for most practical purposes, was not such as to satisfy the literary critics; and that was one of the reasons why he sought my assistance. The upshot was that I promised to read the manuscript, which I did in a few hours next day.

I found that it purported to be the journal of a visit or tour, made in 1970, to a country he called Meccania. I had little difficulty in penetrating the fiction. (It was obvious what country was meant.) As to the date, 1970, I soon came to the conclusion that this was another literary device, to enable him to describe with greater freedom what he considered to be the probable, or as he would be inclined to say, the inevitable development of the tendencies he had observed in that country. Whilst some parts of the description were clear, and even vivid, many things were left in obscurity. For instance, the extent and the limits of the country were quite vague. Only two cities were described in any detail. Little was said about domestic life, little about religion, little about women and children.

When I questioned him subsequently on these points, he said that the obstacles to obtaining full information had proved insuperable: he had not been at liberty to travel about when and where he pleased, nor to get into close contact with the common people. The journal itself if carefully read, he said, gave a sufficient answer on these points, and he had preferred to give a faithful account of what had actually happened to him, and of the conversations he had had with representative Meccanians, leaving the evidence to speak for itself. If he had said little about Education the little that he had said would be found most illuminating, by the aid of insight and imagination. If he had said little about military matters, that was because it would have been positively dangerous to be suspected of spying.

I then questioned him about his references to Luniland, which occur on the very first page of the journal and are scattered throughout the book. Did he mean to indicate England by this term? If so, it was not exactly flattering.

Mr. Ming said he intended no offence. The references *were* perhaps a little obscure. The simple fact was that some years ago he had, for his own amusement, written a harmless satire upon some of our national characteristics. He had then hit upon the phrase Luniland and Lunilanders, and he could not get it out of his head. It was just an instance of his whimsicality.

"But why Luniland?" I asked.

"Why not?" he said. "You do such funny things without seeing that they are funny."

"Such as what?" I asked.

"Well, to take a few things that have happened recently in connection with your great war. You are intensely proud of all your soldiers, and rightly. Yet you seem to pay the citizens who stay at home about three times as much as the soldiers who go out to fight; and I have been told, although this seems more difficult to believe, that you pay the men who volunteered from the very first less than those whom you subsequently had to compel to serve in your armies."

"I am afraid these things you allege are true," I replied, "but they do not seem funny to us."

"No, probably not," he said. "Each nation has its own sense of humour!"

"Have you noticed anything else of the same kind?" I asked.

"Oh, a great many things," he said, "but I just gave you a sample of what first occurred to me. I did hear of some men being excused from serving in the army because they were engaged in carving gravestones."

"For the soldiers, I suppose?"

"Oh no," he replied, "there is no time to carve gravestones for the soldiers; for people who die in their beds at home. Yet you do not profess to be worshippers of the dead."

"Do not misunderstand me," he added. "You are a wonderful people, and it is perhaps because you are Lunilanders that I cannot help liking you. We are Lunilanders ourselves if only we knew it. If you were to come to my country you would find many things just as funny as those I have observed here. Perhaps when you have more time and the opportunity is favourable you may like to read my book of observations on Luniland, but Meccania is a more important subject."

After a careful reading of Mr. Ming's account of Meccania I was inclined to agree with him. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the dangers to be apprehended from Meccania, or Meccanianism, are far more real and imminent than the dangers from what he would call our Lunilandishness, and for that reason I have done my best to bring before the British Public his account of Meccania, although I hope at some future time to produce, perhaps for a smaller circle of readers, his notes on Luniland and the Lunilanders.

Lastly, a word about the suggestion that the journal cannot be the work of a Chinaman. It is implied that the sentiments professed by Mr. Ming, his interests and his way of looking at things, are those of an Englishman. What does this really amount to? Mr. Ming does not like the Meccanians. Certainly *we* should not like the Meccanians. Therefore Mr. Ming is an Englishman. Mr. Ming does not like interferences with his personal habits: he has some belief in the political value of individual liberty. An Englishman resents interference and is also credited with a passion for Liberty. Therefore Mr. Ming must be an Englishman. Now I would suggest that, so far from Mr. Ming's sentiments being evidence against him, they really substantiate his character as a Chinaman and remove all suspicion of his having stolen the document from some Englishman, or some other European. In the first place, he submits calmly to indignities that a typical Englishman would fiercely resent. In the second place, he records things with a detachment that few Englishmen would be capable of, and resigns himself to the customs of the country in the manner of a mere spectator. In the third place, he betrays a philosophical interest, which is again very different from the behaviour of most of our countrymen. He records at great length conversations which we perhaps find tedious, because he thinks the ideas of the Meccanians even more significant than their customs. An Englishman's journal, in the same circumstances, would be certain to contain angry diatribes against the Meccanians, whereas Mr. Ming writes with singular restraint, even when he is describing features of Meccanian life which we should consider revolting.

Possibly the style in which the book is presented, the turns of expression and the colloquialisms, give the journal an English appearance; but for these features the editor is responsible, as it was Mr. Ming's wish that the book should not suffer from the most common defects of a mere translation.

NOTE ON PERSONAL NAMES

THE names which occur in the narrative are exactly as given by Mr. Ming in his journal, but it would appear that he has taken some liberties with the language in attempting to give an approximate English equivalent for the original meaning. The translation of personal names and place-names is notoriously difficult as many names are either corrupt or obscure.

MECCANIA

THE SUPER-STATE

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CHAPTER I

I BECOME A FOREIGN OBSERVER

I HAD already spent several years in various parts of Western Europe, staying for long periods in Francaria, Romania and Luniland, before I made up my mind to pay a visit to Meccania. Before coming to Europe I had read a great deal about Western civilisation generally and had conceived a great admiration for many of its features. My experiences during my travels had, on the whole, strengthened my feelings of admiration; although even an Oriental may be allowed to criticise some of the characteristics of Western nations. In Romania I had been delighted with Italy the never-ending spectacle of history displayed in every part of the country. The whole land was like an infinite museum; but it was not in Romania that the living forces of the present were to be found. In Francaria, on the other hand, the people France were more interesting than the country, charming as that country was in many ways. One perceived that the people were highly civilised; they displayed a combination of intellectual and moral refinement, an appreciation of the material and sensuous enjoyment of life as well as a traditional standard of conduct and manners, while at the same time they were keenly alive to the most modern political ideas, and were perpetually discussing new phases of all those problems which must constantly emerge wherever political liberty is held as an article of popular faith.

England

But it was in Luniland that I felt most at home. Just what it was that kept me constantly pleased and interested it would take long to tell, and I must reserve my observations on Luniland for another occasion. It will be sufficient to say here that I was not so much impressed with the wealth of ideas current in society in Luniland—Francaria was more prolific in ideas, and in Francaria intellectual discussion was more brilliant—as with the stability of certain political principles which, as it seems to me at any rate, are destined to prevail ultimately throughout the world.

For many reasons I thoroughly enjoyed the three or four years which, with short intervals of absence, I had spent there. I had made many acquaintances and even a considerable number of friends. In fact, I had stayed so long, contrary to my original intention, that there was little time left for carrying out the project of visiting Meccania, and I was in some doubt whether I should not have to return home without seeing that remarkable country. For I had already received one or two pressing reminders from my family that they were expecting my return. Before leaving home, however, I had promised some of my political friends, who were interested in the subject of Meccanian culture, that I would not return without investigating the social and political life of Meccania. They had, in fact, written several times to remind me of my promise, and I had put them off by explaining that, whilst travelling in the rest of Europe was a simple and easy matter, I could not enter Meccania without elaborate preparation.

When I began to talk to some of my friends in Luniland of my idea of investigating Meccanian culture on the spot, I received the most conflicting advice. Some said, " Don't go on any account. You will be arrested as a spy, and probably shot ! " Others said Meccania was ahead of Luniland in every respect, and that I should certainly see something worth remembering if I went there. Others, again, said that if I did go, I should be looked upon with suspicion on my return. In fact, I gathered that most of my friends would never open their doors to me again. Finally, I took counsel with Mr. Yorke, a gentleman occupying an important position in Lunopolis, a man of wide culture and sober views, whom it was a great privilege to count among my friends.

He discussed the matter very frankly with me. I remember it was a cold evening early in March, and we sat by the fire in his study after an excellent dinner. " We Lunilanders," he said, " do not like the Meccanians, and few of us ever visit Meccania. We prefer to have nothing to do with that country, and if you followed the advice which nine out of ten of my countrymen would give you, you would not go near Meccania. But you have come to Europe partly, at all events, to study our civilisation, and not simply to amuse yourself; and although there is little intercourse between the Meccanians and the rest of us, if you want to know Europe you cannot afford to neglect Meccania. If I may advise you, I should say, Go there by all means. See as much as you can with your own eyes. But try to see the country as a whole. Don't be content to see just what interests you, or amuses you, or what excites your admiration. If you do that, you will be like certain cranks from this country who come back and tell us there is no poverty in Meccania, there are no strikes, there is no disorder, no ignorance, no preventible disease. You at any rate are not a simpleton to be taken in by any sort of hocus-pocus. But the Meccanians are very clever, and they manage to impose on many people who are not so wideawake as you are. How much you will be allowed to see I don't know. It is a good many years since I was there, but, if things are managed as I am told they are now, you will not see all you want by any means. In fact, in one sense, you would learn far more from books—you read Meccanian easily already, I know—than from an actual visit. But unless you go there you will not feel satisfied that what you read is true, and you will not have the same sense of reality.

" The great thing is to look at the country as a whole—I don't mean geographically, but spiritually. There is always a tendency for foolish people to take this idea from one country and that institution from another. Enthusiastic reformers are ready to shut their eyes to everything else if only they can get support for their particular fads. If you find after a real study of Meccanian life that you would like to turn your own country into a second edition of Meccania, I shall say, like old Dogberry, that you are not the man I took you for."

He impressed upon me the importance of a thorough knowledge of the language, but I was able to satisfy him on that score ; for I had learnt to read easily before coming to Europe, and had already undertaken a long course of colloquial Meccanian under a good teacher during a visit to Francaria. Besides, I rather prided myself on my aptitude for languages, and considered myself well equipped. So I packed up all the miscellaneous goods I had collected, and stored them in Lunopolis, reserving only a couple of trunks filled with the usual necessaries for a mere tourist.

I had my passport from our own Government.

I procured another from the Luniland Foreign Office. I obtained, further, the necessary permission from the Meccanian Government, and, choosing the shortest route, arrived at the outer frontier on March 28th. As most people know, Meccania has a double frontier on the Western side. A belt of country twenty miles wide is preserved as neutral territory, a veritable No Man's Land. This is a relic from the Great War. It is entirely uninhabited and uncultivated. Not a single line of railway crosses it, and only five roads, which are merely rough tracks, lead across it from various points to the five frontier towns on the inner side. These are the only gates into Meccania on the West. The small town on the outer frontier in Francaria, through which I was to pass, is called Graves. Here my first delay occurred. Intercourse with Meccania is so limited that although the official conveyance goes only once a week, I found no more than a dozen persons collected there in readiness for the journey across No Man's Land. I was about to take my place in the conveyance provided to carry us to Bridgetown on the inner frontier, when it was discovered that I had no ticket authorising me to make this journey. I produced my passports and the letter giving me permission to travel in Meccania, but the official who took charge of foreigners pointed to a printed instruction on the back of the letter informing me that a ticket would be forwarded by a later post.

No explanations or expostulations were of any use. Until I had that ticket I could not enter Meccania. The conveyance went only once a week. There was nothing for it therefore but to stay at some hotel in Graves, or return to Lunopolis in search of my missing ticket. I put up at a small hotel in Graves and telegraphed to my last address for my letters. These arrived two days later, and among them was my precious ticket.

The week I spent in Graves forms no part of my Meccanian tour, so I will say nothing about it except that it gave me an opportunity of seeing the extraordinary sight of No Man's Land. It stretched like a belt of desert as far as one could see. Rough grass grew here and there, but no other vegetation. Every year, in the warm weather, the grass was fired, and other means were taken also to ensure that the weeds should not injure the vegetation on the cultivated side, which by contrast looked like a garden. At intervals of every twenty yards or so an iron pole was erected with wire between. Otherwise there was no obstacle; but no unauthorised person, so I was told, ever crossed the line.

At the end of the week a few more travellers arrived and were met by the conveyance from Bridgetown. It was something like a large prison van, but quite comfortable inside except for the fact that the passengers could not see outside. My fellow-passengers were evidently strangers to one another. One or two, I thought, were Meccanians returning home, but as there was little conversation and the journey lasted not more than an hour, I was able to learn nothing about any of them. When the car stopped—it was a sort of large motor-omnibus—the door was opened by a porter in a dark blue uniform, and I found myself in the large courtyard of the Bridgetown Police Office. What became of my fellow-passengers I have no idea, but I was conducted to a waiting-room, where another subordinate official in a grey uniform took my papers, and about ten minutes after led me into a small office adjoining, where a man in a green uniform sat at a desk surrounded by neat little bundles of papers of various colours. He was a rather stout man of middle age, with bushy iron-grey hair and whiskers, yet rather bald in front. With his light grey eyes slightly protruding, he looked at me for a few seconds and said, "Mr. Ming?"

I said, "I am Mr. Ming."

"I am Inspector of Foreigners Stiff," he said very distinctly, "and whilst you are in Bridgetown you will be responsible to me for your good conduct. By what title are you authorised to be addressed?"

"I am plain Mr. Ming, or Citizen Ming," I replied.

"But you have some other title, doubtless," he said. "What office do you hold in your own country?"

"Well," I replied, "I am what we call a National

Councillor. I am also the President of the Literary Society of my own province, and I have been once the Mayor of my native town."

" Then you had better be addressed as National Councillor Ming, or as Literary President Ming, or Mayor Ming," he answered promptly. " Choose which you prefer, and write down the title on the third line of this form."

I wrote down, with a smile, " National Councillor Ming."

" National Councillor Ming," he said, as I handed the form back to him, " before we have any further conversation, you will please pass into the next room and undergo your medical examination."

I passed into the next room, where I found a man, also in a green uniform, but with different facings from those worn by Inspector of Foreigners Stiff. " National Councillor Ming," he said, " allow me to make my necessary medical examination." I wondered how he had got my name so pat. Then I remembered that immediately before passing me into the next room, Inspector Stiff had put a card into a pneumatic tube by the side of his desk. The doctor led me out of his office into a small bedroom, next to which stood a bathroom fitted with various apparatus. After undressing in the bedroom, I was ordered to step into the bathroom, where first of all I was carefully measured in at least a score of places: head, ears, arms, hands, legs, feet, chest, etc. etc. Thumb-prints and foot-prints were taken; I was weighed; my chest was sounded; my organs were investigated with various curious instruments; a record of my speaking voice was taken, for which purpose I had to pronounce several long sentences in Meccanian and in my own language. A lock of my hair was cut off, and finally I was photographed in several different positions. I was then ordered to bathe, at first in water, afterwards in a fluid which was evidently some sort of disinfectant. At the end of about an hour and a half the doctor pronounced me to be "disease-free," and asked me to dress myself in some garments specially used on these occasions. The garments were made either of paper, or of some substance like paper, and were intended to be destroyed after use. I was now in the bedroom. The doctor had disappeared, but a sort of orderly in a grey uniform knocked at the door and brought in a tray with some food and coffee. He announced that Inspector of Foreigners Stiff would be ready to see me again in fifteen minutes. I was very glad of the food, the first I had eaten since my arrival, and at the end of the fifteen minutes I was again led into Mr. Stiff's room, still wearing my paper suit.

"Now," said he, "you will remain in your room until morning, when your own clothes will be restored to you after having been thoroughly disinfected. You can have supper supplied to you in your room, and as you will have a few hours to spare I should advise you to make yourself acquainted with the contents of these documents. You will find they contain all the instructions you require for the first few days."

I retired to my room feeling rather fatigued by the various experiences I had already gone through, but for want of something more interesting I began to study my 'Instructions.' The first document was a closely printed circular of eight foolscap pages containing numerous extracts from the Law relating to the Conduct of Foreign Observers. By the time I had waded through this I thought I had done enough for one day, and as the orderly came in with preparations for some supper I asked him if I might see the daily paper. He did not seem to understand what I meant. After some further explanation he said, "We have no daily paper in Bridgetown: we have only the weekly local gazette."

"But you have some kind of newspaper which circulates in Bridgetown," I said. "Perhaps it is published in some other large town, perhaps in Mecco?" I suggested. (Mecco is the capital of Meccania.)

"We have no general newspaper published daily," he replied.

I thought he had misunderstood me, so I begged him to bring me the local Gazette. He said he would try to get me a copy. Presently, while I was eating my supper, another official, dressed in a bright chocolate-coloured uniform with green facings, made his appearance. He explained that Inspector Stiff had gone home—it was then about seven o'clock or later—and that he was left in charge of the office. I had asked for a newspaper. For what purpose did I require a newspaper?

"Oh," I said, "just to see the current news."

"News what about?" he asked.

"About anything," I replied. "One likes to see the newspaper to see what is going on."

"But no one wants anything except for some purpose," he replied, "and you have not explained the purpose for which you require a newspaper. Also, there are no general newspapers. There are the various gazettes issued by the different departments of Government, and there are a few local gazettes dealing with purely municipal matters. But until you have entered upon your authorised tour of observation, I should have no authority to supply you with any of these."

What a fuss about such a trifle, I thought, and wished I had never troubled him. I apologised for making the request, whereupon he said, "If you wish for something to read after supper there is a case of books in the office, from which, no doubt, I can supply your needs."

I thanked him, and presently went to see the books. There was a work on the *Law in Relation to Foreign Observers*, in three volumes; a *History of* *the Development of Town Planning,* in five volumes; a treatise on *Sewage,* in two volumes; a series of Reports on the various Municipal Departments of Bridgetown; an *Encyclopædia of Building*; and a few other works equally interesting. I took away a volume, hardly noticing what it was, intending to use it only as a means of inducing sleep, which it did most effectively.

I was awakened about half-past six next morning by the orderly in the grey uniform entering the bedroom to announce that my bath would be ready in five minutes, and that it was against the rules to be late. I promptly went into the bathroom and found the bath half filled with a thin, greeny-yellowish fluid which smelt like a strong disinfectant. The orderly explained that all foreigners were obliged to be disinfected in this way.

"But," I said, "I was disinfected only yesterday."

"The bath yesterday," he explained, "was to ensure that you brought no disease into the country."

"And what is this for?" I asked.

"This is to prevent you from contracting any new disease through the change in climate," he answered.

I remarked that the authorities were very solicitous of the welfare of foreigners, to which he replied:

"Ah, we must look after ourselves; a sick man is a source of infection."

I was told to remain in the bath forty-five minutes. I found I had no choice, for, once in, I had no power to get out.

At the end of the forty-five minutes the orderly came and lifted me out, turned on a shower bath, and said, " Breakfast in ten minutes." My own clothes had been returned to me. I dressed quickly, ate my breakfast, which was the usual light continental early breakfast of rolls and coffee, and was preparing to leave the Police Office when the orderly informed me that Inspector of Foreigners Stiff was ready to see me.

" National Councillor Ming," he began, as soon as I entered his room, " I find you have with you letters of introduction to several persons in Meccania." (So my private papers had been closely scrutinised during the process of disinfection.) " You will, of course, not present these until you have received permission from the proper authority. In no case can this be given until a period of three months has elapsed. Now after completing these forms, in accordance with the Instructions I handed you yesterday, you will be authorised to begin your tour of observation in Bridgetown." Here he handed me four forms. " You must first decide whether you mean to stay a week, or a month, or longer; for that will naturally determine the programme of your tour of observation. You cannot in any case leave without giving three clear days' notice and completing your arrangements as to the place you are proceeding to."

"Oh," I said in some surprise, "I had no idea that would be necessary. I thought I would just look round, perhaps for a day or two, then go on to one of your other important cities and make my way by degrees to Mecco."

"Then you cannot have read the Instruction Form No. 4, or you would know that is quite impossible. If you intend to stay a month, please fill up this blue form."

"I think, perhaps, it would be better to say a week," I replied; "then if I want to stay longer I suppose I could do so ?"

"If you had read the Instructions you would have seen that the plan of a tour of a week is on quite a different scale from that of a tour of a fortnight or a month. You must decide now which you will take."

I stuck to the week, and we filled up the necessary forms for Tour No. 1.

"Your conductor will be Sub-Conductor of Foreign Observers Sheep," he said next.

"My conductor ?" I exclaimed. "Is it necessary to have a conductor ?"

"You are not still in Luniland," he replied testily, "and I must again remind you that if you had read the extracts from the Law with reference to Foreign Observers you would not have asked the question. Sub-Conductor Sheep will be here in five minutes," he said, evidently anxious to get rid of me, " and as soon as you have discharged this bill of expenses he will take you to the Hotel for Foreign Observers, and you will begin your tour." Here he handed me a sort of invoice containing the following items:—

To food, 5s.; to bed, one night, 4s.; to medical examination, 10s.; to temporary garments, 2s.; to service, 2s.—total, 23s.

There was certainly nothing exorbitant about the charges; all the same, I grudged the 10s. for the medical examination.

CHAPTER II

BRIDGETOWN, TOUR No. 1

SUB-CONDUCTOR of Foreign Observers Sheep came in as I was paying the bill. He was a well-set-up man about fifty, and had the appearance of an old Non-Com. He looked quiet and rather stolid. I never saw him smile during the whole week I was with him, but he was not offensive in his manner. Like Inspector Stiff he wore a green uniform, but one with fewer facings and with chocolate-coloured buttons. Before we started to walk across to the hotel he asked if I had got my pocket-diary. I fished out a small notebook, such as I had used in Luniland for marking engagements.

"That is of no use for the purpose," he informed me. "You must have one like this"; and he showed me a book about six inches by four inches, with four pages for each day.

"Oh!" I said, "I shall never need all that; besides, it is spaced for a month only."

In a perfectly matter-of-fact voice he said calmly, "Every person in Meccania uses a pocket-diary like this. You will find it indispensable in order that you may make your entries correctly in your weekly diary for the Time Department."

"The what department?" I asked, rather puzzled.

"The Time Department: but never mind; I will explain all that in its proper place. We will get a pocket-diary as we go along."

We walked to the hotel, and on the way Sheep slipped into an office of some kind and handed me a pocket-diary of the regulation type. As we entered the hotel, which was a very small affair,—evidently the number of foreigners in Bridgetown at any one time could not be more than a dozen if they were all lodged here,—he popped his head into a sort of box-office near the door and said in a loud voice, "Nine o'clock. National Councillor Ming." A girl in the box-office echoed the words whilst making an entry on a large sheet, and handed him a buff-coloured sheet of cardboard, divided or ruled into small squares. This he presented to me, telling me to note down on it the exact time when I entered and left the hotel, and to get it initialed every other day by the girl clerk in the box-office. If the times did not tally with her record I was to consult the manager of the hotel.

"The first thing to do is to report yourself to the manager of the hotel," said Sheep when he had taken me to my room, where I found my baggage, which I had not seen since I left Graves.

The manager was a rather fussy little man, also in a green uniform like Sheep's but with different facings. He did not seem specially pleased to see me. All he said was, " I hope you will not give so much trouble as the last of your fellow-countrymen we had here. If you will study the regulations you will save yourself and me much inconvenience. Meals are at eight, one, and six, and at no other times. And remember that conversation with other Foreign Observers is prohibited until you have received the Certificate of Approval."

Conductor Sheep had rung up for a motor-car, and as we waited a few minutes for its arrival he said, " As you will have seen from the printed programme of Tour No. I, we shall first make a geographical survey of the town, then we shall visit the public buildings, taking note of their architectural features, and beginning first with those under local control, following on with those under the joint control of the Central and Local Government, and concluding with those solely under the control of the Central Government. And of the first category we shall see those first which have to do with the bodily needs, and of these we shall take first those connected with food, then with clothing, then with housing; for that is the only logical order. Everything has been carefully prescribed by the Department of Culture and the Department of Sociology, and the same plan is followed by all Foreign Observers, whatever city they may be visiting."

We went first to a look-out tower which stood on a hill about a mile outside the town. Here we had a view of the surrounding country. The town lay in a bend of the river. It was not exactly picturesque, but the large number of new public buildings near the centre, the broad streets lined with villas, each surrounded by a garden in the large residential quarter on the western side, and even the orderly streets of houses and flats on the more thickly populated eastern side, produced altogether a fine effect. The country round was magnificent. Low wooded hills rose on three sides, backed by higher hills in the distance. Sheep talked almost learnedly about the geology of the district and the historical reasons for the situation of Bridgetown. Then he pointed out that the plan of the town was like a wheel. In the centre were the public buildings and squares. The main streets radiated like spokes, and between these came the residential quarters of the seven social classes; those of the first three on the west side, those of the fourth to the north and south, those of the fifth, sixth and seventh, to the east. On the east side also lay the factories, workshops and warehouses. The shops were arranged in a sort of ring running through the middle of each of the residential quarters.

"The seven social classes?" I asked. I had heard in a vague way of the existence of this arrangement, but had little idea what it meant.

"Yes," answered Sheep, as if he were reading from a guide-book, "the first consists of the highest aristocracy, military and civil; the second, of the military and naval officers, all of noble birth; the third, of the highest mercantile class with an income of £5000 a year and the officials of the first grade in the Imperial civil service; the fourth, of the officials of the civil service of lower grades and the bulk of the professional classes; the fifth, of the skilled artisan class; the sixth, of the semi-skilled; and the seventh, of the menial industrial groups."

I asked him to go over it again whilst I took a note for future reference.

The rest of the morning passed in listening to Sheep's elaborate descriptions of the drainage and sewage systems, the water supply, the power and light and heat supply, the tramway system, the parcels system, the postal delivery system, the milk delivery system, all from the geographical point of view. After lunch we spent some time in going all over the town on the tramways. This completed the geographical survey.

At six o'clock I was deposited in the hotel just in time for dinner. Presently I prepared to go out to some place of amusement; but on attempting to leave the hotel I was stopped by the porter, who told me I could not leave the hotel unless accompanied by my conductor.

So I spent the evening in writing up my journal.

During the day I had noticed that everywhere all the men were dressed in a sort of uniform, and that the colours of these uniforms corresponded to the rank or class of the wearers. Perhaps I ought to have mentioned this circumstance earlier, for certainly it was one of the first things I noticed when I began to go into the streets. The colours of the uniforms are very striking and even crude. They supply the only touch of the picturesque in Bridgetown, for, judging by my first day's impressions of the town, I should imagine that the authorities responsible for rebuilding it have swept away every vestige of the tiny mediæval city which once existed on this spot and have replaced it by a perfectly uniform piece of Meccanian town-planning. In such a setting these uniforms strike one at first as out of place, but perhaps I have not yet grasped their purpose or significance. The colour of the uniforms of the members of the First Class is white; that of the Second Class, red or scarlet; of the Third, yellow; of the Fourth, green; of the Fifth, chocolate; of the Sixth, grey; of the Seventh, dark blue. But so far I have seen no white uniforms, and only a few scarlet. I saw several yellow uniforms to-day, but the most common were the green uniforms of the Fourth Class and the chocolate uniforms of the Fifth Class, to which the skilled artisans belong. Greys and dark blues were also fairly numerous; but what surprised me most of all was the small number of people to be seen in the streets. I must ask Sheep for the explanation of this.

Promptly at nine o'clock next morning Sub-Conductor of Foreign Observers Sheep made his appearance at the hotel, and we began our tour of the public buildings. He took me first to the 'Import-Food-Hall,' which stood alongside the railway on the outskirts of the town near the industrial quarter. It was a great warehouse through which all the food brought into the town has to pass before it is allowed to be sold in the markets and shops. (The sole exception is milk, which is distributed by municipal servants.) The building was very extensive and several stories high. The two ends were open for the passage of railway wagons. The architecture was not without a certain coarse dignity. The arches were decorated in Romanesque style, and the whole front facing the street was covered with rude sculptures in high relief of scenes connected with the production of food. The interior walls were covered with frescoes depicting similar scenes. Conductor Sheep grew almost enthusiastic over this exhibition of Meccanian Art. All these decorations, he said, had been executed by the students of the Bridgetown Art School. I was not altogether surprised to hear this; there was something so very naïve and obvious about the whole idea.

We next saw the municipal slaughter-houses, which were almost adjoining. Inspector Sheep informed me how many minutes it took to kill and prepare for the meat market a given number of cattle, sheep or pigs. He dilated on the perfection of the machinery for every process, and assured me that not a single drop of blood was wasted. The amount of every particular kind of animal food required for each week in the year was ascertained by the Sociological Department, and consequently there was no difficulty in regulating the supply. The perfection of the methods of preserving meat also effected some economy. Conductor Sheep assured me that the Meccanian slaughter-houses had become the models for all the civilised world, and that a former Director of the Bridgetown slaughter-houses had been lent to a foreign Government to organise the system of technical instruction for butchers.

The five markets were in five different parts of the city. They served to distribute perishable foods only, which were not allowed to be sold in the ordinary shops. All women in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Classes were obliged to do their marketing in person. Each person was obliged to deal solely with one dealer for a year at a time, and to attend at the market at a particular hour, so that there should be no congestion and no waste of time on the part of the dealers. This, I suppose, explains the wonderful orderliness of these markets. There was no gossiping or chaffering. Whether the people enjoy this arrangement is a matter upon which Sheep did not enlighten me. He said it had been calculated by the Time Department that an economy of 50 per cent had been effected in the time spent upon the daily purchase of food since the introduction of the modern market system.

Foods that are not perishable are sold in the shops, and as regards certain articles there is the same system of choosing each year the shop at which one buys a particular article, whilst as regards others trade is free. The housewife must buy her bread always from the same baker; but things like mustard, spices, coffee or preserved food may be bought at any shop.

The sale of drink is regulated in a different way. The three lowest classes are not allowed to keep drink in their houses; but as the favourite national drink is a mild kind of beer which can be got in any restaurant, there is no apparent hardship in this regulation. The way in which excess is checked is very curious. The weekly budgets of every family, in all classes below the fourth, are checked by the authorities—by which department I do not know—and if the amount spent on drink exceeds a certain sum per head, a fine is inflicted and the offender warned. If the offence is persisted in, the offender is forbidden to buy any drink for a specified period. One might suppose that such regulations could easily be evaded; so they could in most countries, but not in Meccania. Everything is so perfectly scrutinised that no evasion seems possible—at any rate as far as the three lowest classes are concerned.

" This scrutiny of family budgets," I remarked, " is it not resented and even evaded ? "

" I do not think it is resented," answered Sheep, " but it certainly cannot be evaded. Why should it be resented ? The facts are only known to the officials, and in any case they would be required by the Sociological Department. How else could it obtain the necessary data for its researches ? Every woman is taught how to keep her household accounts in the proper manner, and she sends in her account book at the end of each quarter. That is necessary for many reasons. No," he concluded, as if the idea had not occurred to him before, " I have never heard of any complaints. Only those would wish to complain who desired to evade some salutary regulation; consequently there is no reason why, out of regard for them, we should interfere with a practice that has so many advantages."

" What are the advantages ? " I asked, for so far I had seen no advantage except the possibility of checking expenditure upon drink.

" The use of these accurate family budgets and household accounts to the Sociological Department is simply indispensable. To the Department of Trade and Industry also they are very valuable. In fact, you may take it that all our Meccanian institutions are so arranged that they serve several purposes and fit in with the whole Meccanian scheme of life."

Incidentally, in connection with the family expenditure on food, he mentioned model dietaries. I was curious to know what these were. He explained that there were three recognised kinds of dietaries. First, the Food Department prescribed model dietaries for families of the three lowest classes in normal health. Secondly, when each person was medically examined—and this happened at least once a year—the medical officer might prescribe a dietary for the individual; and lastly, if a person were positively ill, it would be the duty of the medical officer in charge of the case to prescribe a dietary. I was going to ask some further questions about the Medical Department, when Sheep reminded me that we had still several other municipal departments to visit before we came to the Medical Department, and that we must not depart from the programme of our tour.

The Department for the Inspection and Regulation of Clothing came next. I was rather surprised that this should be a municipal institution, seeing that the regulations were uniform for the whole country.

Sheep explained that it was just because the regulations were so perfectly uniform that the function of administering them could be entrusted to the municipality. The department was quite a small affair. Only about ten inspectors were required for Bridgetown. Their duties were to see that no person wore any uniform to which he was not entitled, and that on ceremonial occasions full-dress uniform was worn. It was quite easy to ensure that a uniform of the right colour was worn, but in addition to that the various grades of each class were indicated by the various facings, stripes, buttons and badges, as were also the different occupations within each class and grade. The penalties for wearing unauthorised decorations were very heavy, and infringements were very rare, as detection was almost certain.

" I should have thought that the whole clothing trade would be in the hands of the Government," I remarked.

" That is not part of our system," replied Sheep. " The production of all the kinds of cloth for all the uniforms is so standardised that there would be no advantage in the State taking over the mere manufacture. Each person chooses his tailor from a small panel. Naturally the members of the higher classes have the best tailors. In fact, a tailor of the first grade would not be allowed to make suits for the three lowest classes; it would be a waste of talent."

" And what about the women's clothing ? " I inquired. " They do not wear uniforms. Is their dress regulated in any way ? "

" Only in two ways," answered Sheep. " Every woman must wear, on the front upper part of each of her outdoor dresses, a piece of cloth of the regulation pattern and colour, to indicate the class to which she belongs. Also the expenditure on dress is limited according to the social class."

When we came to the offices of the Department of Health, Sheep said I had made a grave error of judgment in choosing Tour No. 1—the tour for a single week only—as there was enough to occupy us for a week in the Department of Health alone. It included the Sanitation Section, the Medical Inspection Section, the Medical Dispensing Section, the Medical Attendance Section, the Hospital Section, the section of the Special Medical Board, the Marriages and Births Section, the Post-Mortem Section, and the Buildings Section.

After this I was not surprised to hear that over a thousand persons were employed in the Health Department, in addition to the workmen—chiefly of the Sixth and Seventh Classes—who did the actual menial work of keeping the sewage system in order and keeping the streets clean. I might write a whole chapter on the Health Department, but it will perhaps suffice if I mention the most singular features.

Inspectors visit every house twice a year to see that each house and flat is kept in a sanitary condition. Each person is medically examined once a year—this is in addition to the system of medical inspection in schools—and whatever treatment is prescribed he must submit to.

" What happens," I asked, " if a person declines to submit to treatment ? "

" He would be taken before the Special Medical Board," answered Sheep.

" And what is that ? " I asked.

" We shall come to that presently," said Sheep reprovingly. He went on to explain that the Dispensing Section treated all persons of the three lowest classes who did not require to go into a hospital. The doctors were municipal officials and there was no choice of doctor.

" Why do you not allow choice of doctor ? " I asked.

" That would interfere with the proper classification of the diseases," he answered. " As soon as a complaint is diagnosed, it is handed over to the appropriate doctor for treatment. The same applies to the Medical Attendance Section ; but persons in the three lowest classes are not generally attended in their homes, they are brought into the hospitals. The chief work of the Medical Attendance Section is in connection with births ; consequently we employ a number of women doctor-nurses in this Section. Now we come to the Special Medical Board. It is a sort of Higher General Staff. It collates the results of the work of all the other medical sections, and is responsible for the annual report. It receives the instructions of the Central Medical Department of Meccania, and sees that these are carried out. It directs special investigations in all abnormal cases. In the case of so-called incurable diseases it pronounces its decree as to whether the case is incurable, and in that event it authorises the death of the patient."

"Authorises the death of the patient?" I said. "Without the patient's consent?"

"The patient can hardly be the best judge," said Sheep.

"What about the relatives then?" I asked.

"The relatives have no voice in the matter," said Sheep.

"That sounds very drastic," I remarked; "and what about the sort of case you mentioned a little while ago?"

"The case *you* mentioned?" said Sheep. "I do not remember any such cases, but if one occurred it would be dealt with under Section 143 of the Medical Regulations, which prescribes that in case of persistent disregard of the instructions of the authorised medical officer, with the consent of the Special Medical Board, the person guilty of such refusal is to be removed to an asylum for mental abnormality."

"A lunatic asylum!"

"We do not call them lunatic asylums. The term is obsolete; it does not accord with our system of classification."

Sheep next dealt with the Marriages and Births Section. This is in some ways the most remarkable of all. It appears that a licence to marry is issued to all persons in normal health, the Department prescribing the number of children to be born within each period of five years. Persons classified as abnormal are specially dealt with, and on this subject Sheep referred me to the Report of the Central Medical Department, which I could obtain in the Great Meccanian Library at Mecco. The Post-Mortem Section carried out an examination in all cases of interest to the Health Department before cremation.

I asked what the Buildings Section was. It seems to be a sort of link between the Architectural Department and the Health Department, and supervises the building regulations from the hygienic point of view.

The next day Conductor Sheep called punctually at nine o'clock to continue the tour of observation. We had come to the end of one section, as marked out in the mind of the 'Authority,' and were now to begin another, namely, the institutions controlled partly by the City and partly by the State. I suspect that the control by the City is a good deal of a fiction, for the State has power to take over any of the functions that are not performed to its satisfaction.

We began with the Police. The office of the Central Police Station was in the building where I had first been inspected, examined and instructed, on my arrival. It was a large building for a town of the size of Bridgetown, and seemed full of officials, police officers and clerks. Yet I had noticed very few police officers in the streets. I remarked upon this to my guide. I said, " In the country I have just come from they have a great many police officers in the streets of the large towns, but very few other officials connected with the police service. Here, apparently, you have few police officers in the streets, but a great many other officials connected with the police service. Can you explain that ? "

" Yes," he said ; " I have heard something of the kind before, and although I have never been abroad to other countries, the books in our libraries describe the police systems so fully that I think I can answer your question. The police in Luniland—so I am informed — do little else besides keeping order in the streets and following up criminals."

" Exactly," I remarked. " What else should they do ? "

" Here," said Sheep, " these are the least of their functions. We employ fewer police in keeping order in the streets, and in detecting criminals, than any country in the world. Crime and disorder are almost unknown in Meccania. Our people are so well brought up that they have little desire to commit crime. Those who do show any propensity in that direction are deported to criminal colonies and give very little trouble afterwards. Besides, there is, after all, very little opportunity to commit crime, as you would soon discover if you attempted to do so."

"I can well believe that," I said. "But what, then, do your police find to do?"

"Speaking generally, their function is to see that the regulations devised for the good of the State are properly carried out."

"And those regulations are rather numerous, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly. As they affect every department of life, there are many occasions upon which the assistance of the police is necessary in order that people shall not make mistakes," said Sheep.

"But," I said, "I thought that the officials of each department of State attended to so many things that there would be little left for the police. For instance," I added, "the inspectors of food and clothing, of buildings, of public health, of education, and so forth."

"Yes, yes," answered Conductor Sheep; "but suppose some matter arises which may belong to several departments; the citizen needs guidance. Quite apart from that, the police watch over the life of the people from the point of view of the general public interest. They collect information from all the other departments. Suppose a man neglects his attendance at the theatre: the amusement authority must report the case to the police. Similarly with all the other departments. Suppose, for instance, a man were to try to make an unauthorised journey, or to remain absent from work without a medical certificate, or to exceed his proper expenditure and get into debt, or try to pass himself off as a member of a higher class: in such cases it is the police who take cognisance of the offence. Then there is the annual report and certificate of conduct with respect to every citizen. How could this be filled up without exact information? All this involves a great deal of work."

"Indeed it must," I replied.

"You see, then, that our police are not idle," said Sheep triumphantly.

"Indeed I do," I replied.

After this enlightening explanation the offices of the Police Department no longer presented a mystery to me. I looked with awe at the hundreds of volumes of police reports in the official library of the Bridgetown police office, and wondered what the Central Police Office Library would be like; for I was told it contained a copy of every police report of every district in the country, as well as those for the great capital Mecco.

When we came to the Department of Education, which was one of the institutions managed by the State and the Municipality, Conductor Sheep regretted once more that I had chosen Tour No. 1. We could only spare half a day at most for this important department. Here, again, I can only note a few of the unusual features of the system, as explained to me by my encyclopædic conductor. We saw no schools except on the outside, but I noticed the children going to and from school. They all marched in step, in twos or fours, like little soldiers. They did not race about the streets or play games. Wherever they started from they fell into step with their comrades and carried their satchels like knapsacks. The State Inspectors, it seems, decide what is to be taught, and how it is to be taught: the local officers carry out their instructions and classify the children. In the office of the Department there is a sort of museum of school apparatus in connection with the stores section. The books are all prescribed by the Central Department, and no others may be used. The children of the Sixth and Seventh Classes attend common schools in order to get the benefit of better classification. There are no schools in Bridgetown for the members of the First and Second Classes. They go elsewhere, but the other classes have separate schools. The children of the Sixth and Seventh Classes stay at school until they are twelve; but their instruction is largely of a practical and manual kind. Those of the Fifth Class remain until fifteen, and are trained to be skilled workmen. After fifteen they receive instruction in science in connection with their several occupations.

Closely connected with the system of education, for the three lowest classes, is the Juvenile Bureau of Industry. This is controlled by the Department of Industry and Commerce. No young person in Meccania can take up any employment without a certificate granted by this Department. The officials of the Juvenile Bureau, after consultation with the officials of the Education Department, decide what occupation boys and girls may enter, and no employer is allowed to engage a boy or girl except through the medium of the Bureau.

" What about the inclinations of the boys and girls, and the desires of their parents ? " I remarked to Sheep.

" The inclinations of the boys ? " said Sheep, more puzzled than surprised. " In what way does that affect the question ? "

" A boy might like to be a cabinet-maker rather than a metal worker, or a mason rather than a clerk," I said.

" But such a question as that will have been determined while the boy is at school."

" Then when does he get the chance of choosing an occupation ? "

" It will depend upon his abilities for different kinds of work. And he can hardly be the judge of that himself," added Sheep.

" Where do the parents come in, then ? " I asked.

" The parents will naturally encourage the boy to do his best at school. And after all, does it matter much whether a boy is a mason or a carpenter ? In any case, the number of carpenters will be decided each year, and even each quarter, by the Department of Industry. It is not as if it would alter his class, either; he will be in the same class unless he is very exceptional and passes the State Examination for promotion."

I saw it would be useless to suggest any other ideas to Sub-Conductor Sheep, who seemed constitutionally unable to understand any objections to the official point of view. I could hardly hope to learn much about education in a single afternoon. All we saw was the mere machinery from the outside, and not even a great deal of that. I gathered that there was a most minute classification, with all sorts of subdivisions, of the children according to their capacities and future occupations. There were sufficient local inspectors to provide one for each large school, and their chief business was to conduct psychological experiments and apply all sorts of tests of intelligence in order to introduce improved methods of instruction. The inspectors themselves were all specialists. One was an expert on mental fatigue, another devoted himself to classifying the teachers according to their aptitude for teaching particular subjects, another specialised in organising profitable recreative employments for different grades of children; another superintended all juvenile amusements. Sheep showed me the exterior of a large psychological laboratory attached to the Technical College. Bridgetown was too small to have a University of its own, but it had two large 'Secondary' Schools for pupils in the Third and Fourth Classes, and an enormous technical school for the boys of the Fifth Class. It was fitted up like a series of workshops for all sorts of trades, with class-rooms and laboratories attached. Sheep asserted that it was through these schools that the Meccanian artisans had become by far the most efficient workmen in the whole world. I had not time to ask many questions about the provision for games or physical training, but from something Sheep said I inferred that whilst games had been reduced to a minimum the experts had devised a system of physical training which satisfied all Meccanian requirements.

Sheep strongly advised me to study Meccanian education in Mecco if I ever got there. All true Meccanians recognised, he said, that the whole national greatness of Meccania rested on their system of education. No doubt statesmen had done much, but the ground had been prepared by the schoolmasters, and the statesmen themselves had been brought up in the Meccanian system of education. He himself, he confided, was the son of a Meccanian village schoolmaster.

Why then, I asked, begging his pardon if the question were indiscreet, did he wear the chocolate button which indicated that he had once been a member of the Fifth Class ?

" When the sevenfold classification was introduced," he answered, " village schoolmasters who were not graduates were in the Fifth Class, and I was in the Fifth Class until I was thirty and gained my promotion in the Police Department."

Tour No. 1 made no provision for studying the lighter side of life in Bridgetown. Sheep said that practically all forms of amusement were controlled by a section of the Department of Culture, but that the Organising Inspectors of Private Leisure were appointed locally, subject to the approval of the Central Department.

"Organising Inspectors of Private Leisure!" I exclaimed. "What an extraordinary institution!"

"In what way extraordinary?" said Sheep.

"I am sure they do not exist in any other country," I replied.

"Perhaps not," replied Sheep; "but, then, our culture is not modelled on that of any other country. Possibly other countries will discover the use of such officials when they have developed a better system of education."

"But what is their function?" I asked.

"Any person who has more than an hour a day unaccounted for, after doing his day's work, and fulfilling all his other duties, is required to submit a scheme every half-year, showing what cultural pursuit he proposes to follow. The inspectors will assist him with expert advice and will see that he carries out his programme."

"Is there nothing left unregulated in this country ?" I asked in as innocent a tone as I could command.

"That is a very interesting question," replied Sheep. "If you will consult the *Forty-eighth Annual Report of the Ministry of Culture* you will find an interesting diagram, or map, showing the whole field of Meccanian life and the stages in its organisation. One by one all the spheres of life have been gradually organised. If you examine the diagram showing the present state of Meccania, and compare it with similar maps for other countries, you will perceive how very much more advanced our culture is than that of any other country."

"And what regions still remain for the Department of Culture to conquer ? "

"An investigation is going on at the present time into the interesting question of individual taste," he answered. "It is being conducted by the Æsthetic Section of the Department, but they have not yet reported."

Where everything is so completely regulated it is not surprising to find that poverty, as understood in many countries, no longer exists ; but I was not quite clear how it was provided against. Once more Sheep was ready with a complete explanation.

"Our laws," he said, "do not permit anyone to remain idle, and the regulation of the expenditure of the lower classes secures them against improvidence. Besides, as they contribute to insurance funds, they receive a pension in old age, and allowances during sickness or disablement. Poverty is therefore impossible."

"Apparently, then," I remarked, "if the labouring classes will surrender their liberty to the State they can be relieved of all danger of poverty."

"I do not understand what you mean by surrendering their liberty," replied Sheep.

"In many other countries," I said, "people desire to please themselves what they will work at, and indeed whether they will work at all. They like to have the liberty of striking, for instance, against wages or other conditions that do not satisfy them, and I have heard people in such countries declare that they would rather preserve their freedom in such things than be secured even against poverty."

"It is no part of my business to discuss such questions," replied Sheep, "but I have never heard such a question even discussed in Meccania. The foundation of Meccanian law is that the private individual has no rights against the State."

It was towards the end of the week that I mentioned to Conductor Sheep that I had had great difficulty in procuring a copy of the local newspaper published in Bridgetown; in fact, I had not managed to get a sight of it. Sheep explained that Tour No. 1 did not allow time for the study of local social life in such detail as to provide a place for such a thing, but he was good enough to procure me a sight of the *Bridgetown Weekly Gazette.* It was well printed on good paper, but it was more like an official municipal record than a newspaper. It contained brief reports of municipal committee meetings, announcements as to forthcoming examinations, lists of persons who had passed various examinations ; and statistics of births, death sand marriages. The figures for the births were given in an unusual form. There were fifty first-born boys, forty-five first-born girls ; forty-seven second-born boys, forty-eight second-born girls ; and so on down to three fourteenth-born boys and seven fourteenth-born girls. There were statistics of accidents, with brief details. There was a list of small fines inflicted for various infringements of regulations, and announcements of forthcoming legal cases. The only advertisements were a few concerning sales of property and household goods. It was altogether the driest document calling itself a newspaper I had ever seen. I tried to draw Sheep on the subject of newspapers in general, but he seemed rather annoyed.

" I procured this *Gazette,*" he said, " as a concession to your curiosity, although it forms no part of our programme, and now you wish to go into a subject which is totally unconnected with our tour. The question is of historical interest only, and if you stay in Meccania long enough to study the historical development of our Culture, you will study the history of the Press in its proper place and connection. I will, however, add for your present information that the Central Government issues a complete series of Gazettes, which serve the same purpose for the country as a whole as the *Bridgetown Weekly Gazette* for his locality."

With that the subject was closed for the present.

Although I had now been here nearly a whole week, I had not yet had an opportunity of strolling round to see anything that might catch my fancy. Everything had been done according to the programme. Nevertheless, I had noticed a few things in the course of my daily tours which Conductor Sheep did not think worthy of comment. I got very tired of his guide-book style of explanation. Bridgetown was hardly worth the painful and systematic study which he compelled me to give to it, and I decided to go straight on to the capital in a few days.

I saw no drunken people—the regulations do not permit drunkenness. I saw no loose women in the streets. On this subject I can get no information from Sheep, but I suspect there is something to learn. There were no advertisement hoardings. I must confess I rather missed them; they may be ugly, but they are often interesting. The shops were very dull. Nothing was displayed in the windows to tempt people to buy, and there were no people about the streets shopping in a casual way. People must know what they want, and go to the shops which specialise in the particular article. There were large stores; but even these were so divided into departments that there was little fun in shopping. Indiscriminate and casual shopping is distinctly discouraged by the State. Advertising is restricted to trade journals, except for a little in the miserable local gazettes. Only those forms of production which the State considers necessary are allowed to expand indefinitely; all the others are regulated. Consequently there are none of the incitements to expenditure which exist in most modern countries. I have never been a great shopper, but I could not have believed how much duller life was without the attractions of the shop windows and the stores, if I had not been here. For instance, I found that I had very foolishly come without a pair of bedroom slippers, so I wanted to buy a pair. I looked round naturally for a shop where I should see such things displayed in the window, but I had to go to the slipper section of the boot department of a store, choose from an illustrated catalogue the quality I wanted, and take whatever they had.

I thought I should have seen book-shops displaying all the most recent books and publications. In other countries I found it possible to pick up a great deal of information by noticing the kind of literature exposed for sale. Booksellers' shops have always an attraction for me. To my amazement the booksellers' shops have disappeared from Meccania, yet I know from my own reading they used to be quite a feature in the life of the old Meccania. The censorship of the printing trade has apparently revolutionised the book-selling business. At any rate, the only place in which I could get to see books in Bridgetown was at a sort of office in the Technical College. It seems that the Publications Department of the Ministry of Culture—I think that is the right name—has in every town a public room, fitted up like a small library, in which all the current books published are exhibited for six months at a time. This is really a very useful institution in itself, but the books exhibited were not on sale, so all the pleasurable excitement of a book-*shop* was wanting. To *buy* books one must order them through an authorised book-agent, who has a sort of monopoly. I wondered why such an extraordinary arrangement should have been made, but when I got the explanation from Sheep it was quite consistent with the general scheme of things here.

I asked him whether the Government discouraged the public from reading. He said, "Not at all. Our people are great readers; they do not need any incitements to read. They consult the lists of new books and come to the book-room to see any book in which they are interested. Then they decide whether to buy it or to borrow it from the public library."

"But why do you not permit people to open book-shops?"

" It would be a sheer waste," replied Sheep. " One book-agent can supply all the books required in Bridgetown without keeping a stock of thousands of books that would never be wanted or not wanted for years. Apply the same principle to other towns and you will see that by keeping only one central stock we effect a great economy."

I pointed out that in other countries the publishers kept the stock and supplied booksellers with what they wanted, allowing them to keep a few copies for the immediate sales; and that consequently this was almost as economical an arrangement.

" But," said Sheep, " we have no publishers in your sense of the word. When a book is written it cannot be printed without the sanction of the Government censors, who decide how many copies in the first instance are to be issued. The publishers are really printers who arrange the form and style of the book, but undertake no responsibility such as publishers in other countries undertake."

" Then the Government are really the publishers ? " I suggested.

" Well," answered Sheep, " the Government *are* the publishers of most books. That is to say, the number of Government publications exceeds the number of private publications, but as regards the latter the publishers or printers assume the financial responsibility for the sales but are insured by the

Government against loss, so long as they comply with the conditions imposed by the Publishing Department."

But I have digressed too far. My interest in book-shops must be my excuse. Not only were there no casual shoppers, but I saw no one sauntering about the streets. Everybody seemed to have an object in view. There were no children playing. The children were either marching in step to or from school, or they were performing some kind of organised game—if it could be called a game—under the supervision of a teacher or guardian. The workmen going to their work, or returning, also marched in step like soldiers. The women going to market went at the appointed time and took their place in a little queue if there were more than three or four in front of them. At the theatre there was no crowd outside; every one had his numbered seat and went to it at the minute. Each man's ticket has printed on it the day of his attendance, the number of the seat and the exact time at which he must be present.

There are no such things here as football matches or other sports witnessed by crowds. The men attend military drill once a week, some on Sundays and some on Saturdays. This is in addition to their annual periods of drill. The only custom which survives from old times, resembling the customs of other countries, is that of sitting in the evening in gardens attached to restaurants. Here the people listen to bands of music whilst they drink a thin kind of liquor and smoke cigars.

The sense of orderliness is almost oppressive. Every hour of the day has been mapped out for me, except when I have been writing my journal in the evening. The day before yesterday we began to visit the State institutions. The chief of these is the Post Office, but the most remarkable is the Time Department. The Post Office is very much like any other post office, except that it has a Censor's Department. All letters are actually read by the clerks in the Censor's Department. Sheep gave me a curious explanation in justification of this extraordinary institution. Put briefly, his case was this. The State could not, with due regard to the interests of the community, allow *all* letters to go uncensored. All sorts of mischief might be hatched. If the State censors any letters it cannot logically stop short of censoring all. As to the labour involved, this pays for itself. For the public, knowing that its letters are liable to be read, does not indulge in unnecessary letter-writing. Thus time is saved, which can be devoted to more useful purposes. The statistics compiled by the Time Department have completely proved that the labour of the fifty clerks employed in censoring the letters effects a saving of more than four times the amount of time which would otherwise be spent by the public in useless letter-writing.

This Time Department is the most extraordinary institution of all I have seen so far. Every person over ten years of age is required to fill in a diary-form each week showing the time spent daily on every separate operation. The diary form is a stout double sheet of foolscap providing four pages altogether. The first page is stamped with the name, address, and other particulars of the 'diarist.' The two open pages are ruled into 336 small oblong spaces, one for each half-hour of the week. In these spaces brief entries are made, such as 'breakfast,' 'tram-journey,' 'conversation,' 'sleeping,' etc. This part of the diary thus gives a chronological account of each day in successive half-hours. On the back page is printed a long list of about 150 categories in three columns. I noticed such headings as these:—Sleep, dressing, meals (subdivided), travelling (conveyance specified), employment (specified under many heads), study (specified), reading, letter-writing, interviews with officials, attendance at theatre, concert, church, museum, etc., conversation (subdivided into family, friends, others), other amusements (specified), public ceremonies, drill, etc. Against each of these headings the total number of minutes spent during the week is recorded.

The information derived from these diaries is scrutinised and worked up into elaborate reports and statistics for the benefit of the Sociological Department, the Police Department, the Department of Trade and Industry, and so forth. I hope to learn more of this most remarkable feature of Meccanian life when I reach the capital, where the Central Time Department carries on its work.

I have good reason to remember the Time Department, for on Sunday morning after breakfast I was sent for by the official who manages the Hotel for Foreign Observers. He told me rather curtly that he had just received a telephone message from the local office of the Time Department inquiring whether I had sent in my diary, as it had not been received. I told him I knew nothing about such a thing. He said, " Nonsense. You have had the usual instructions given to all foreigners. Look among your papers." I did look, and there, sure enough, was a sheet of instructions and three blank forms. He said, " You had better fill it up at once." So I went to the writing-room and began. But I could not remember what had happened at all clearly enough to fill the half of it in. At the end of an hour the hotel manager came to ask what I was doing all this time. I explained my difficulty. He asked if I had not kept a pocket-diary : it was indispensable. I suddenly remembered the pocket-diary Sheep had procured for me ; but I had forgotten to make use of it. What a fool I was ! We spent the next hour doctoring up the diary and then sent it in. He told me I should have to pay a fine of ten shillings for the delay. I did not mind that, but the next day I received a visit from an official from the Time Department, who came with Conductor Sheep to point out that there were many errors in the diary. The times for a number of items did not tally with those in Conductor Sheep's diary, although we had been together the whole week from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. I should have to make out a fresh diary with the assistance of Conductor Sheep, and pay a fine of £1. The charge of falsifying my diary would not be made, in view of my colossal ignorance; the charge would be reduced to that of negligence to verify particulars. Conductor Sheep was rather disagreeable about the affair, as it might be considered to reflect on him. I certainly thought he might have taken the trouble to instruct me more fully upon such a momentous business. However, as I was on the point of leaving Bridgetown for Mecco, I was not much disturbed by his ill-humour.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION TO MECCO

IT is a week since I arrived in Mecco, and for the first time I have leisure to write up my journal. The life of a Foreign Observer is very strenuous, for the Meccanian method of seeing everything according to programme and timetable is very fatiguing. Already I feel that a holiday will be welcome at the end of my tour. In the whole of this vast city of Mecco there is nothing casual, nothing incidental, nothing unprovided for. Although I am only a spectator, I feel like a little cog in the huge complicated machine. The machine seems to absorb everything; the individual counts for nothing. That is perhaps the reason why it seems impossible to get into contact with any human being other than the officials who instruct me and conduct me every moment of my time. I begin to wonder whether the individual Meccanian really exists, or whether his personality is merged in the official personality which is all that is visible to me.

To resume the record of my experiences. Before I left Bridgetown, Sub-Conductor Sheep repeated his opinion that in choosing Tour No. 1, which allowed only a week for the study of an important town, I had revealed my incapacity as a Foreign Observer. He evidently put me down in one of the pigeon-holes of his mind as a mere tourist—a creature almost extinct in Meccania. The day before my departure I paid the bill for his services, which were reckoned at the modest rate of 16s. a day. My hotel bill was also discharged, and I proceeded to my final interview with the Police Authorities. I had to submit to another disinfecting bath, but apart from this the medical examination was a formality.

At the Police Office, Inspector of Foreigners Stiff was very sarcastic at my expense. " So you think there is nothing more to be learnt in Bridgetown," he remarked. " It is not more than ten days since you left Luniland, and you think yourself qualified to proceed to the very centre of our national Culture. Evidently your stay in Luniland has not improved whatever powers of appreciation you may have possessed; but that is what one would expect from that country of amateurs, charlatans and cranks. You have seen nothing of our Museum, our Art Collections, our Libraries: you are not interested in such things. How, then, do you suppose you will be able to appreciate what you will find in Mecco? We do our best to assist all Foreign Observers, but it is rather a waste of time to provide an experienced and qualified Conductor for persons who are so clever that they only require a week to learn all there is to know in a whole city. However," he added, " the law with respect to Foreign Observers does not forbid you to proceed to Mecco. You have your medical certificate, I suppose, to show that you are still disease-free ? " I produced it. " Have you notified the Railway Authority of your intention to travel to Mecco ? " I had not done so.

" Turn to paragraph 44 of your Instructions and you will see that a day's notice must be given," he said brusquely. " You will have to stay another night in the hotel and travel to-morrow. Good morning."

Sheep accompanied me to the booking-office at the station, where I filled up a form of application. When this was presented to the clerk in charge, a fussy little old man in a chocolate-coloured uniform, he turned to Sheep in great excitement and whispered something which I did not hear. Then he turned indignantly to me and said, " But you are not an Ambassador, nor even a Government Agent."

" No," I said ; " I am merely National Councillor Ming."

" So I see," he answered testily, " but why do you wish to travel First Class ? " (I had filled in the word " First " in the space for " Class.") " Are you not aware," he said, " that only foreigners who are Ambassadors are ever permitted to travel First Class ? You will travel Third Class in the compartment for Foreign Observers."

Next morning I went to the station in good time. An attendant from the hotel brought my bags over and handed them to one of the porters. I did not see them again until I found them in the hotel at Mecco. I was handed over to an official at the station. This person looked at my travel-permit and informed me curtly that I had arrived too early. I said, "Oh, that does not matter. I can look about the station until the train starts."

"That is not permitted," he said. "You will go to the waiting-room—that is what a waiting-room is for. Your train will come in a quarter of an hour before it is due to leave, and you will then take your seat, Coach Third Class, Compartment IV., Seat No. 12."

So I was taken to the waiting-room. Apparently I did not miss much of interest, for the station was one of the quietest and dullest I have ever seen. There is very little traffic across the frontier, so that Bridgetown station is a sort of dead-end. Only three passenger trains a day go direct to Mecco, and these are by no means crowded. I have since learnt that the restrictions on travelling in all parts of Meccania are part of the general policy designed to keep down unnecessary forms of expenditure to a minimum.

The train was due to leave at ten o'clock. At a quarter before ten exactly, as I looked through the window screen I saw it gliding along the platform into the bay. A bell rang, and my porter came to take me to my place. As I stepped across the platform I saw about a hundred people preparing to get into the train. Where they had been up to this moment I do not know. There was no bustle. Each person took his place as if he had been taking his seat in a concert-room. There was no examination of tickets. Every one had booked his seat the day before, and every seat was numbered. The train was made up of five passenger coaches, a post-office van, a baggage wagon, two wagons for perishable goods and a special coach for soldiers (privates). One of the passenger coaches painted red bore a large Roman II., indicating that it was a Second Class coach, another painted yellow was marked III., two others painted green were marked IV., and another painted chocolate was marked V. There was no First Class coach on this train, as there were no persons of the First Class travelling by it. Neither, apparently, were there any Sixth or Seventh Class passengers. Every one travelling wore a sort of uniform overcoat of the same colour as that of the coach in which he travelled. It was only later that I was able to recognise readily and without confusion the colours appropriate to the seven social classes, but I did notice that the Fifth Class wore chocolate, the Fourth green, the Third yellow and the Second red or scarlet.

I was taken to a compartment temporarily set apart for foreigners in the Third Class coach.

There was still ten minutes before the train started, so I looked out of the window and saw the porters and minor officials storing the luggage, putting in the mails, and so forth. The perishable goods had already been loaded, in a siding I suppose. No one was permitted on the platform except the railway servants, so that the station looked almost deserted. Presently the stationmaster, dressed in a green uniform with chocolate facings and a bit of gold braid on his cap, came on the platform and looked at his watch. Then, exactly as the big bell of the station clock began to strike ten, he waved a signal and the train glided out.

In a few minutes we were going at 100 miles an hour, and in less than a quarter of an hour the speed increased to 150. The track was smooth, but I began to feel dizzy when I looked out of the window. There was little to be seen, for every now and then we passed between embankments that shut out the view. I pulled down the blinds, turned on the light and tried to read. In a short time I had almost forgotten the immense speed at which we were travelling.

I had previously learnt that if I went to Mecco by the express I should see nothing of the country, and had consequently proposed to travel by a stopping train, perhaps breaking my journey a few times. But when I mentioned this to Sheep he said it would be impossible. I could not stop at any place to make a stay of less than three days, and each of the places I stopped at would have to be notified. I must either go direct to Mecco, or to some other city. So here I was, almost flying to Mecco. After about an hour, one of the guards came in to see that everything was in order. He wore a chocolate uniform, with a number of stripes and other symbols to indicate his particular grade, occupation and years of service. After stamping my ticket he grinned good-humouredly for a Meccanian, and said, " So you are going to see the wonders of our wonderful Mecco. Lucky man! There is nothing like it anywhere in the world."

" Indeed," I said, " you have travelled abroad a good deal, then ? "

" Oh no. I have never been out of Meccania, thank God ! "

" What makes you think there is nothing like it, then, in any other country ? " I asked.

" Oh, the wide streets, the buildings, the gardens, the monuments, the uniforms, the music, everything—it is c-o-l-o-s-s-a-l ! When you have seen the great monument, the statue of Prince Mechow ! There is nothing like it anywhere. You will see ! And you must not miss the Memorial Museum of Prince Mechow ! I tell you it is a privilege to live in Mecco. But I must not gossip," he said, as if half ashamed ; " I have many duties," and off he went. Towards the end of the journey, which lasted a little over two hours, he looked in again and said, " You must not leave Mecco until you have seen the great festival on Prince Mechow's birthday." I promised to remember it.

As we drew near to Mecco the train slackened speed, and I could see, but only for a minute or two, a great city spread over a wide plain. There were domes and towers, steeples and pinnacles, huge masses of masonry suggesting great public buildings, then miles of houses and gardens and in the far distance warehouses and factories, but no smoke. We plunged into a tunnel and then emerged suddenly into a blaze of light. The train glided along the platform, and as I stepped out I could not help looking round in admiration at the truly magnificent arches and lofty dome of the great Central Station of Mecco. The roof seemed to be made of some wonderful prismatic glass that radiated light everywhere. The ground was covered with immense tiles in coloured patterns, all as clean as if they had been washed and scrubbed that very hour. Not a speck of dirt or smoke was to be seen. Although hundreds of people were in the station, there was no bustle. No one sauntered about; every one seemed to go just where he had business. There was no scrambling for luggage or for cabs. No one was allowed to take luggage with him unless it could be carried in one hand; the rest was all registered and sent to its destination by the railway servants. Only persons of the third or a higher class were allowed to use motor-cabs, and these were all ordered beforehand. The impression of orderliness was almost uncanny. As I reached the end of the platform I was touched on the shoulder by a man in the green uniform of the Fourth Class, decorated with several stripes and badges. "You are National Councillor Ming," he said, "and I am Conductor of Foreign Observers Prigge."

He seemed to be in very good spirits, but this made him rather offensive than amiable. He treated me as if I were a sort of prisoner, or at any rate as if I were a very juvenile pupil. He said that as my bags had gone to the Hotel for Foreign Observers we need not go there first, but could proceed straight to the Police Office. This was not far from the station and was a large building, almost like a fortress in front. Viewed from the other side, as I afterwards saw, it was more like a set of offices with large windows.

First of all I was taken to the police doctor, who spent nearly two hours upon a minute medical examination of me. The object of this could not have been to make sure that I was "disease-free," for I had been seen the day before by the police doctor at Bridgetown. It could not have been for the purpose of identification, seeing that the authorities had obtained all the finger-prints and everything else they required, on my first arrival. I could only conclude that it was for the purpose of scientific research. I judged from the remarks made by Doctor Pincher in the course of his investigations that he was an expert anthropologist. He took samples of my hair, not only from my head, but from various parts of my body. He took a sample of my blood, and of the perspiration from several different glands. He even removed a small particle of skin, without any pain. He tested my eyesight, hearing and smell, my muscular powers, and all sorts of reactions to various stimuli. He informed me that I should require a pair of spectacles. I said I did not think it was worth while, as I had never yet experienced any discomfort. He replied that that made no difference, and proceeded to write out a prescription which he told me to take to a certain office, where, in a few days, I should be supplied with the necessary glasses. He then took a cast of my mouth and of my ears, and measured me in twenty different places. Finally he gave me a drink of what appeared to be water, but which made me unconscious for several minutes. What he did during those few minutes I do not know, and he did not deign to inform me. As I left him he smiled—I suppose he thought he was being amiable—and said, " We do not have the pleasure of seeing a Chinaman here every day."

I was then taken to the office of Chief Inspector of Foreigners Pryer. He looked at me, asked a few trivial questions, and handed me over to a subordinate, Lower Inspector of Foreigners Bulley. This gentleman sat at a desk, and after noting the time and my name on a sort of tablet, took out a yellow form, foolscap size, upon which he proceeded to make notes of my answers to his questions. He put me through a catechism as to what I had seen in Bridgetown. Which of the local institutions had I visited, which of the national, which of the local and national? What had I learnt of the industrial and social economy of Bridgetown? What had I learnt of the cultural institutions? Had I made notes of my daily tours, and could I produce them? (Luckily all my notes were in a language that Inspector Bulley could not read.)

He then proceeded to discuss plans for my tours of observation in Mecco. In the first place, how long did I propose to stay? I did not know. What did the length of my stay depend upon? I said it would largely depend upon my ability to stand the strain of it.

I thought this would perhaps annoy him, but on the contrary it pleased him immensely. "Good!" he said. "You are here to study the institutions of Mecco, and you will stay as long as you have the strength to carry out your task."

That was not what I meant, but I let it pass.

"I think you had better select the preliminary six months' tour of observation," he said. "After that, you can begin the study of any special branch for which you are qualified, and for which you have an inclination; possibly industry, possibly art, possibly sociology, possibly education. We can decide that at the end of your preliminary period.

You will have for your guide, for the first few weeks, Lower Conductor Prigge. As, however, he has just been promoted to a higher rank in the police service, he will not be available after the first few weeks, but I will arrange for a suitable successor."

He then presented me with several documents. "This," he said, handing me a thick notebook of some two hundred pages, "is the preliminary diary in which you make your notes in whatever form you like. There are four pages for each day. This is the formal diary for the Time Department, to be carefully entered up each week and posted before Sunday morning. These are the sheets of Instructions specially drawn up for Foreign Observers in Mecco; you will notice they are all marked 'Tour No. 4,' and numbered consecutively. And this," handing me a thin metal plate about half the size of a postcard, "is your identification ticket."

It was now the middle of the afternoon. I had had no luncheon, so when Prigge came to take me off to the hotel, I proposed that we should have some tea. He demurred a little, as he did not drink tea, but he consented to have some coffee and a cigar in the smoke-room if I would drink my tea there. So we went on talking over our tea and coffee, and this is a specimen of the conversation:—

"You will understand," said Prigge, "that everything depends upon your own energy and intelligence. If you apply yourself thoroughly to the work before you, you will learn more in a fortnight under my guidance than in a whole year in Luniland. I have had a long experience in conducting foreigners. Most of them have no idea how to observe, especially those who come from Luniland. They want to roam about without any system or method at all. They want to see an Art Gallery one day, and a manufactory the next; or even on the same day. Then they want to see a natural history museum on the same day as an archæological museum; they will fly from pottery to pictures, and from geology to botany. Why, I was taking one of them through our great museum illustrative of the stages of culture, which is arranged in twenty successive centuries, and when we had reached the sixteenth he actually wanted to turn back to look at something in the twelfth!"

"I think it will be a good thing," I said, "if I ask you questions as we go along, about matters that strike me. With all your knowledge you will be able to tell me many things outside the regular routine."

"Your proposal implies," he replied, "that I shall not give you the appropriate information in proper order. If you will follow my directions you will learn more than by any amount of aimless and desultory questioning. I have studied the principles of Pedagogy as applied to conducting Foreign Observers, and I shall accommodate the presentation of new matter to the existing content of your mind, in so far as your mind has any definite content.

You will not be precluded from asking questions, but whether I shall answer them will depend upon their relevance to the subject in hand."

Before we parted he gave me some general instructions. "For the first week," he said, "you will not be permitted to converse with other foreigners staying in the hotel. To-night you will be free to attend to your private affairs and prepare for to-morrow. We shall begin by a survey of the general geography of the city, and in the evening you will have permission to attend one of the lectures specially given to Foreign Observers by Professor Proser-Toady on Prince Mechow, the re-Founder of the Meccanian State. Professor Proser-Toady is the Professor of Historical Culture in Mecco, and this course of lectures is given periodically, so that foreigners may have no excuse for being ignorant of the true history of the rise and development of Meccanian culture."

So I spent the evening in writing letters, looking up my 'Instructions,' and filling up my diary. For this day, interviews with officials accounted for at least five hours. Next morning at nine o'clock Conductor Prigge turned up, looking more perky than ever. He had all the airs of a professor, a police officer, and a drill sergeant rolled into one. "Our first business will be to study the map," he said. "To that we will give one and a half hours. After that we will ascend the look-out tower in the Meteorological Department and take a view of the city in the concrete. In the afternoon we will go by tram-car in three concentric circles, and in the evening you will attend Professor Proser-Toady's lecture."

We began with the maps. I remembered something of the maps of the old city from my geographical studies at home, and I remarked on the great changes, for hardly a vestige of the old city seemed to remain.

Prigge appeared rather pleased. "That is an instance of the superiority of our culture," he remarked. "All the other capitals of Europe," he said, "still preserve the plan of the mediæval city, in the central parts at least. And the central parts are the most important. The authorities profess to have preserved them because of their historical interest. In reality it is because they do not know how to remodel them. Against human stupidity the very gods fight in vain, but to intelligence all things are possible. Any dolt can plan a new city, but we are the only people in Europe who know how to remodel our old cities. Now you will notice," he went on, "that we have preserved the old royal palace and several other important buildings. They do not interfere with the general plan. The large central ring, over a square mile in extent, is occupied by Government buildings; and although there is a larger number than in all the European capitals put together, they are not crowded. The square of Prince Mechow, where the great statue stands, is the largest in Europe. The ring outside that is occupied by Cultural Institutions, Museums, Art Galleries, Libraries, the University, the Zoological Gardens, the Botanical Gardens, and so forth. Next comes a very much larger ring, occupied almost entirely by the residential quarters of the six social classes. (In Mecco itself there are no members of the Seventh Class.) The whole presents a superficial resemblance to a great wheel."

"Where, then, is the manufacturing quarter and the business quarter?"

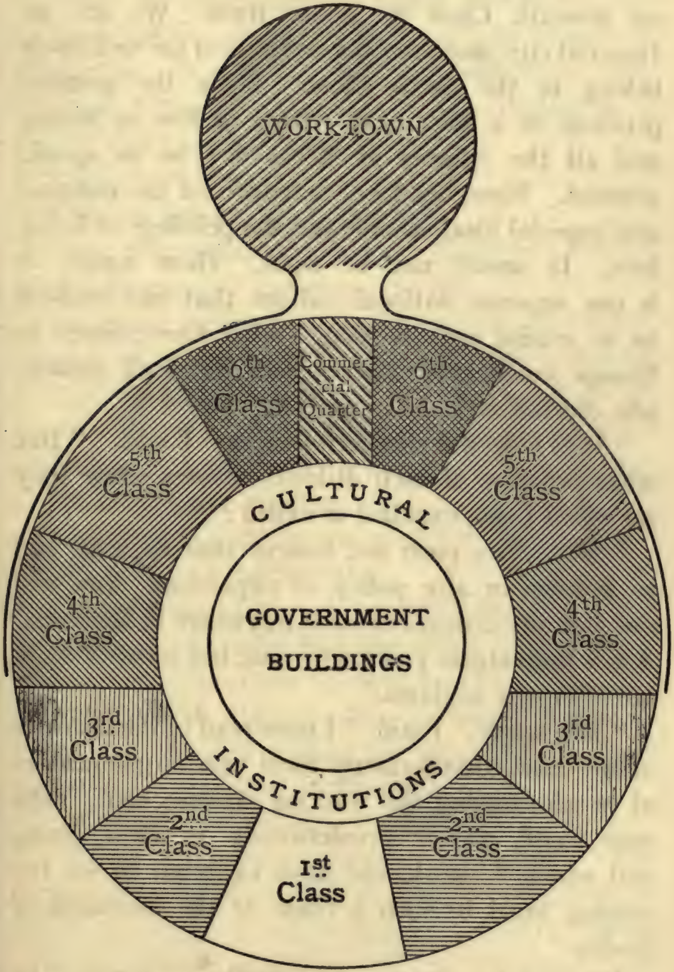
"Now where would you expect?" he asked, as if to show off his own cunning.

"I saw a number of factories in the distance," I said.

"Yes," he answered, "the manufacturing quarter lies outside the ring and forms a sort of town by itself."

"And the business quarter? That must be centrally placed," I said.

"Not necessarily. If you draw a line from the centre of Mecco to the industrial quarter you will find the commercial quarter occupying a long rectangle between the second ring and the outer edge of the exterior circle. The commercial quarter thus cuts the residential ring on one side. The residential quarters of the Sixth and Fifth Classes lie on each side of the commercial quarter and are therefore nearest to the industrial quarter.


WORKTOWN
6th Class
Commercial Quarter
6th Class
5th Class
5th Class
CULTURAL
4th Class
GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS
4th Class
3rd Class
3rd Class
INSTITUTIONS
2nd Class
2nd Class
1st Class

"You will observe," he continued, "that we have no Seventh Class in Mecco itself. We are an Imperial city, and even the servants of the well-to-do belong to the Sixth Class. It is the greatest privilege of a Meccanian citizen to live in Mecco, and all the citizens of Mecco are, so to speak, selected. None but loyal upholders of the national and imperial ideal are allowed the privilege of living here. It would not be right. There again, it is our superior national culture that has enabled us to realise such a plan. What Government in Europe could drive out of its capital all citizens who did not actively support the State?"

"It is indeed a wonderful thing," I said. "But what becomes of such disloyal citizens when they are, shall I say, expelled or exiled?"

"Ah! You must not believe that *we* have had to indulge in any policy of expulsion. You will not find any disloyal element anywhere in Meccania. A few individuals you might find, but most of them are in lunatic asylums."

"But surely," I said, "I have read in the histories of Meccania, that formerly there were large numbers of people, among the working classes chiefly, who were, well, rather revolutionary in their ideas, and whom I should not have expected to see becoming loyal to such a State as the Meccania of to-day."

He smiled a very superior smile. "Really," he said, "the ignorance of our country which foreigners betray is extraordinary. Disloyalty to the State is found in every country *except* Meccania. We have got rid of it long ago by the simple process of Education. If we find an odd individual who displays disloyal sentiments we regard him as a lunatic and treat him accordingly."

"How?" I asked.

"We put him in a lunatic asylum."

"And your lunatic asylums? Have you enough for the purpose?" I ventured to ask.

Conductor Prigge luckily did not see the point. "In most cases," he said, "the threat is sufficient. We require very few lunatic asylums, just as we require few prisons. But we are wandering from the subject," he remarked; and he drew out a map of the residential quarters, coloured in white, red, yellow, green, chocolate and grey, the colours of the classes, omitting the Seventh.

I noticed that the parts coloured white, red and yellow covered about half the circle. I was going to put some questions to Prigge as to the relative numbers of the classes, when he said, "I do not think you have yet grasped our sevenfold classification of the citizenship of Meccania."

"Somewhat imperfectly, I am afraid," I replied.

"Then you have not grasped it," he said. "You cannot be said to grasp it if you are not perfectly clear about it. I will explain. Attend! Begin with the lowest. That is the logical order. The Seventh Class consists of persons of the lowest order of intelligence who cannot profit by the ordinary instruction in the schools beyond a very moderate degree. They are not very numerous. From the age of ten they are taught to do simple work of a purely mechanical kind, and when strong enough are set to do the most menial work which requires little intelligence. A few other persons, who have failed in life through their own fault, are relegated to this class as a punishment.

"The Sixth Class corresponds to the unskilled labouring class of most foreign countries. They are recruited from the children who at twelve years of age show only average ability. They are then trained to do either simple manual work, or to act as servants in families below the Second Class.

"The Fifth is the largest class; it is larger than the Sixth and Seventh together. We require a very large number of skilled artisans and clerks in a subordinate capacity. Consequently, we train all who are capable of profiting by a combination of theoretical and practical instruction until the age of fifteen, and even for some years after that, in industrial schools, where they study the practical aspects of mathematics and science. Consequently, they are by far the most skilled artisan class in the world. We have no trouble in inducing them to apply themselves to study, for any member of the Fifth Class who failed to profit by the system of instruction provided for him would soon find himself in the Sixth Class, which enjoys much less in the shape of privileges and material well-being than the Fifth.

"The Fourth Class includes most of the bourgeoisie, the bulk of the officials and clergy, as well as the small group of professional people who are not officials. In detail it comprises tradesmen, managers of businesses and foremen in responsible positions. All these are in the Industrial and Commercial world. Then come all Civil servants below the first grade, all non-commissioned officers in the Army and Navy, all the Clergy below the rank of Bishops. The professional people I referred to are a few who have not been absorbed in the official class. We have no journalists in Meccania, no doctors who are not in the State service, and no lawyers who are not officials."

"Then who *are* these professional people?" I interrupted.

"They are merely a handful of people, mostly possessed of small private means, who write books that are never published, or cultivate art, or music, or science. They are not good enough to be taken into the State service, and they are gradually disappearing altogether.

"The Third Class," he resumed, "corresponds partly to the Higher Bourgeoisie of other countries, but it also includes several more important elements. It comprises the richer merchants and manufacturers, who must possess an income of at least £5000 a year; the first class of Civil servants, the

Higher Clergy, those University Professors who have held their posts for ten years and are approved by the Ministry of Culture, landed proprietors who are District Councillors and Magistrates, and all Fundholders with an income of £10,000 a year.

"The Second Class is the military class. It includes all officers, who must be of noble birth. A few of the highest Civil servants are in this class, but they must have previously served as officers in the Army or Navy.

"The First Class is partly military and partly civil; but, except members of royal or ducal families, all in the First Class have previously passed through the Second. Ambassadors are in the First Class, but they have all served for a period as officers in the Army. Even the head of a department of State is not admitted to the First Class unless he has previously been in the Second Class.

"Lastly, the relative numbers of the various classes are as follows: out of a total population of 100,000,000 only about 10,000 are in the First Class; 4,000,000 are in the Second; 6,000,000 are in the Third; 20,000,000 are in the Fourth; 40,000,000 are in the Fifth; 20,000,000 are in the Sixth; and the rest, nearly 10,000,000, in the Seventh Class.

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"All women take the rank of their fathers or their husbands, whichever is the higher; children take the rank of their parents until their sixteenth year. Is that clear?"

"Quite clear," I replied, "except in one particular."

"What is that ?"

"I take it that some, at any rate, pass from one class to another. By what means, for example, does a person who starts life, let us say in the Fourth Class, obtain admission to the Third ?"

"We must take some particular category."

"A business man, a small manufacturer who is highly successful, perhaps makes some valuable discovery which enriches him. How does he obtain admission to the Third Class ?"

"He must have an income of at least £5000 a year, and he must have performed some service to the State," answered Prigge promptly.

"And a Civil servant ?"

"If he is promoted to the first grade he also is admitted to the Third Class, but this does not frequently happen."

"Then, on the whole, the children of those in each class respectively remain in the class in which they are born ?"

"That is so as a rule. The percentage has been worked out carefully by the statistical branch of the Sociological Department. About 4 per cent of the Seventh Class enter the Sixth, about 5 per cent of the Sixth enter the Fifth, about 3 per cent of the Fifth enter the Fourth, about 8 per cent of the Fourth enter the Third. No one, strictly speaking, enters the Second from the Third, but as many of the men of the Second Class marry women in the Third Class, which is the rich class, the sons may enter the Second Class, if they are suitable as officers in the Army. Also, a number of the women of the Second Class marry men in the Third Class, and their sons also may enter the Army."

"It is a wonderful system," I ventured to observe.

"It is simplicity itself," said Prigge, "yet no other nation has had the intelligence to discover it, nor even to copy it. As a matter of fact, it is the only logical and scientific classification of society; it puts everybody in his proper place."

After this conversation, or rather this discourse, we walked out to ascend the look-out tower; but on the way we had to cross the great square of Prince Mechow, and there, for the first time, I saw the great monument about which I had heard so much. I had expected something extraordinary, but I was not prepared for the actual thing. It was as high as a church steeple. At the base was a huge shapeless mass of basalt. Above this rose a square granite block, twenty feet high, covered with high-relief sculptures representing in allegorical form the reconstruction of the Meccanian Super-State. At the four corners were four figures representing Arms, Intellect, Culture and Power. Above this again towered a great pedestal a hundred feet high and forty feet in diameter. On the top stood the colossal statue of Prince Mechow, a gigantic portrait-figure of a man in the uniform of the First Class, his breast covered with decorations, a sword in one hand and a mace or some symbolical weapon in the other. The impression of brute force which it conveyed was terrific. Every person in the square, as he came within sight of it, took off his hat; those in military dress saluted it, and pronounced the words, "Long live Meccania and God bless Prince Mechow!"

My first feeling on seeing it was one of intense disgust at the barbarity of the thing, and I was just going to make some satirical remark when I caught sight of Prigge's face. It wore an expression of absolute ecstasy, and the look of fierce disdain with which he said "Uncover!" was startling. He added something which sounded like "Mongolian monkey," but in the excitement of the moment I was not quite sure what he said.

I tried to pacify him by saying, in as innocent a tone as I could assume, "It is indeed the most remarkable statue I have ever seen."

"It is the most perfect embodiment of Meccanian Culture: no other country could produce such a work," he replied solemnly.

"I am inclined to agree," I said. "Who was the artist who conceived and executed a monument of such wonderful proportions?"

"The artist? What other nation could produce a man who united such gifts with such a true Meccanian spirit? He desired that his name should never be spoken. When the work was completed after ten years, he gave up his life, and begged to be allowed to be buried underneath the rock with all the tools that had been used in the execution of the statue. His dying request was respected. His name is never uttered, but every child in Meccania knows it, and every citizen in Meccania comes once every ten years to salute the statue of Prince Mechow and do honour to the hero-artist who lies buried beneath."

"I shall never forget the story," I said, and we walked on to the look-out tower. On the way, I noticed that every person in the street saluted every other person of higher rank than himself. I have since learnt that there are six different forms of salute, one for each class above the Seventh, and that it is a point of strict etiquette to give the right salute. A salute appropriate to the Fourth Class given to a member of the Third is an insult, and the wrong salute given to a member of the Second (military) Class may cost the offender his life.

We ascended the look-out tower. The sight was magnificent. From where we stood the details of the architecture could not be seen, nor even the style of the buildings. But the general impression produced by such a vast assemblage of massive edifices was one of grandeur and power, while the bright sunlight and the absence of smoke and dirt gave the whole city the appearance of having suddenly sprung up in a night, like Aladdin's palace.

To the west, in a great semicircle, the quarters of the first three classes presented a spectacle such as I have not seen in any capital. Every house was a mansion or a villa surrounded by a pleasant garden. Here and there one saw large stretches of beautiful park. To the east the houses were clustered more thickly together, but even on this side there was an air of orderliness and comfort, although certainly not of luxury, which contrasted favourably with the populous districts of the towns I had seen in other countries. About five miles away we could see distinctly, with the aid of the glasses, the manufactories and workshops and warehouses of the industrial town that served the needs of the whole capital.

Conductor Prigge seemed duly satisfied with the impression made on me. "Here," he said, "you are at the centre of the civilisation of the modern world. Here are three million thoroughly efficient Meccanians, every one in his proper place, every one fulfilling his appointed duty. Think of the disorder, the squalor, the conflict of aims, the absence of ideals, represented by a city like Lunopolis, or Prisa, and look on this picture!"

We descended and returned to the hotel.

After luncheon we proceeded with our tour of the tramway system. By this means I got a good view of the exterior appearance of the houses of the various classes. It confirmed the impression I had gained from the look-out tower, except in one respect. The houses of the well-to-do looked as if they had all been designed by the same school of architects, and except that they differed in size they might have been turned out by machinery. The houses of the rest of the population were 'standardised' to an even greater degree. The dwellings of the Sixth Class are really blocks of small flats of a standard size; those of the Fifth Class are similar, except that the rooms are a little larger and there are more of them. One curious fact came to light in the course of Conductor Prigge's explanation of the housing system. It seems that the Births Department determines the number of children each family is expected to have within a given period of years, and the houses are distributed accordingly. Thus a family in the Fifth Class which is due to have, let us say, four children within the next seven years, is assigned a flat of five rooms. Then, if the same family is due to have two more children within the next five years, they move into a house with seven rooms. Persons in the first grade of the Fifth Class are allowed to take a flat with more rooms on payment of a special rate or tax.

Apparently there is very little choice of houses. As all the houses of a certain grade are practically alike, if a tenant wishes to move to another street he has to furnish valid reasons; and it is not easy to furnish reasons satisfactory to the authorities. Besides, the number of houses or flats is very closely proportioned to the number of tenants, and there are never many vacant houses. The members of the Third and higher classes own their own houses, and can therefore change their residences by purchasing or exchanging. By special privilege members of the Fourth Class can obtain permission to buy their houses, but as these are mostly flats they are usually rented from the municipality.

CHAPTER IV

PROFESSOR PROSER-TOADY'S LECTURE

FOLLOWING Conductor Prigge's instructions, I presented myself at six o'clock in the evening at the entrance to the Great University of Mecco. It was the first time I had been out without my 'keeper,' but as everybody else was dressed in the Meccanian costume, whilst I was wearing the clothes I had been accustomed to wear in Luniland and Francaria, there was little risk of my going astray. A porter darted out of a box in the entrance hall and directed me to Room 415, where the Professor of Historical Culture was to deliver his monthly four-hour lecture to Foreign Observers. I found about a dozen Foreign Observers of various nationalities waiting in the small lecture-room, and presently a few more arrived. Some were Scandinavians, some South Americans ; a few, I thought, were Turks ; several were from some part of India. At 6.10 precisely the Professor came in. He wore a brilliant yellow uniform of the Third Class, with green facings and buttons and a number of little ribbons indicating, I suppose, various services rendered to the cause of Meccanian Culture. Apart from his dress he resembled the caricatures of Meccanian professors in our comic prints. His head was bald on the top and at the front, but at the sides great tufts of white hair protruded. His grey beard was of ample proportions. His coarse wizened face and staring eyes, covered by a pair of huge spectacles, gave him the appearance of a Jack-in-the-box as he sat behind a high reading-desk. His voice was tough and leathery. At the end of three hours it sounded as fresh and as harsh as in the opening sentences. I cannot reproduce the whole lecture; if I did it would almost fill a book by itself. I can only hope to give a rough idea of it by paraphrasing some of the most salient passages.

He began by saying that to accommodate himself to the culture of his foreign auditors he would endeavour to present his subject in the simplest possible form, which was the narrative, and would sketch the biography of the great re-founder of the Meccanian State, the true architect of the First Super-State in the world, the greatest political creative genius that had ever stepped upon the World Stage, Prince Mechow. We had all seen his memorial statue, a unique monument to a unique individual, and no doubt it had made an impression upon our imagination; but it was impossible for any work of art however great—and here he paid a tribute to the hero-artist who built the monument—to convey more than a symbolical suggestion of the all-embracing magnificence of Prince Mechow's truly Meccanian personality. For that we must look around at the Super-State itself.

Prince Mechow, he said, was historically the culminating figure of the national development of Meccania. Compared with many countries in Europe, Meccania could not boast a long history. Some historians sought a false glory for Meccania by tracing its greatness back to the so-called Roman Empire of the Middle Ages, but true Meccanian history went back only a few hundred years. In fact, it was not until the eighteenth century that the Meccanian State in the proper sense of the word began, and only in the nineteenth century did it take its place among the powers of the modern world. In the nineteenth century the Meccanian State was saved by the genius and will of one great man, the worthy predecessor of Prince Mechow, his great-uncle Prince BLUDIRON. From a scientific or philosophical point of view it was difficult to say whether Prince Bludiron had not contributed as much to the greatness of Meccania as Prince Mechow; for it was he, undoubtedly, who laid the foundations upon which the final structure rested. The work of Prince Bludiron was very different from, but also similar in spirit to, the work of Prince Mechow. His task had been to rescue the young and inexperienced State from the perils and distractions of the false ideals of Liberty and

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Democracy, to secure the power of the State over all sections and classes, to create the proud and confident Meccanian spirit and to set the nation on the right path.

The task of Prince Mechow was to erect the Super-State on the foundations laid by Prince Bludiron; in other words, to organise the energies of the whole nation to one supreme end, to train and direct the powers of every individual so as to produce one mind and one will.

Turning to the work of Prince Bludiron, the Professor said that when he began his work Meccania was distracted by false and conflicting ideals, of foreign origin. Revolution was in the air. People were ready to drive out their lawful rulers. Popular government was demanded. Parliaments were being set up. It was the saddest page in Meccanian history. Had these anarchic forces triumphed, Meccania would have sunk to the level of other nations, and the Super-State would never have arisen. It was the greatest testimony to the intellectual genius and moral power of Prince Bludiron that, after forty years of strenuous work, the whole outlook for Meccania was completely changed. The false ideal of individual liberty was dead and buried. Popular government was a discredited superstition. The military aristocracy were secure in their rightful position. The efficiency of the Government was demonstrated in every direction, and not least on the field of battle. Wars had been won with a rapidity unprecedented in any age.

Prince Bludiron's success was so complete that it was almost impossible for us now to realise how great his difficulties had been. So strong were the forces of Democracy that even he had to temporise and set up a Parliament. He even granted manhood suffrage.

Dr. Proser-Toady then explained how Prince Bludiron outwitted the disloyal elements among the people by securing the reality of power to the organised centralised State, whilst leaving the semblance of control to the representative bodies. He quoted a Foreign Observer, at the end of Prince Bludiron's career, who declared that the institutions set up by him enabled the State to wield the maximum of power with the minimum of opposition. Strangely enough, said the Professor, the very movement that threatened to undo all his work was in reality of the greatest service. He referred to the movement of Meccanian Socialism or Social Democracy which owed its peculiar character to a certain demagogue named Spotts. The career and influence of Spotts was for a time almost as remarkable as Prince Bludiron's. Spotts persuaded his followers that the economic tendencies of modern life must inevitably create the Socialist State. The people need only wait until these tendencies had worked themselves out and then seize the power of the State, which would drop into their

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hands like ripe fruit. He saw in the existing State nothing but organised Capitalism. Consequently he encouraged his followers to take no part in the actual Government, but to maintain themselves in permanent opposition until the inevitable revolution came about, when they were to assume the whole control. Spottsian Socialism became the universal doctrine of the Meccanian proletariat of those days. They talked about the economic interpretation of history, about economic forces, about economic revolutions, mixed with vague notions of Liberty and Equality. But in reality they cared not a straw for Liberty; what they sought was Power. Yet by standing in permanent opposition to every other element in the State they played into Prince Bludiron's hands. Whilst they waited for the inevitable revolution, he had accustomed the people to prosperity; and had raised the prestige of the State at home and abroad. He had gained the support of all the strongest elements in society, had trained an efficient bureaucracy and an efficient military aristocracy. And yet at his death the followers of Spotts went on waiting for the economic revolution!

The Professor then dealt briefly with what he said was the most difficult period for a Meccanian historian, the period between the death of Prince Bludiron and the rise of the still greater statesman, Prince Mechow. In that interval no great leader arose, but a number of foolish statesmen who fancied they were cast in the mould of the great Bludiron. At that time Meccania had commercial relations with the whole world, and was rapidly penetrating every country with its peculiar culture. Its army and navy were growing in strength, and the temper of the people was becoming restless and aggressive. They lacked the controlling hand of Prince Bludiron. They were carried away by dreams of sudden world-conquest. Foolish statesmen allowed the country to be plunged into war with half the world at once. The Meccanians performed wonders, but they could not perform miracles, and in the end the country was reduced to great straits. Provinces were torn away. Its accumulations of wealth were exhausted; its manhood was decimated. The situation was terrible, yet it was this tremendous ordeal that indirectly created the most favourable conditions for the work of Prince Mechow.

During the war the Government had been compelled to take over, more and more, the control of every department of life. Under the pressure of war the last vestiges of the obsolete doctrines of Individualism had disappeared. Now that the war was over, the necessity for increasing all the means of wealth-production placed a new power in the hands of the State. It was in these years of what was called 'Reconstruction' that Prince Mechow came to the front. Every one was depressed. The most conflicting views were expressed. Some people lamented that the whole work of Prince Bludiron had been destroyed. Others said it had been all a mistake, and that the nation ought to have followed the example of the rest of Europe. Some advocated hare-brained schemes of 'Internationalism,' as they called it.

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Prince Mechow was one of the few who kept a clear head. He saw exactly where the blunder had been made. Meccania had ventured upon projects of world-conquest before completing the internal work of perfecting the Super-State on the foundations laid down by Prince Bludiron. He saw that we must go back exactly to the point where Prince Bludiron left off. But the first step was the most difficult. Prince Mechow was quite a young man, not more than thirty, and was only an Under-Secretary. He had one advantage in that he was a grand-nephew of Prince Bludiron and had the ear of the Emperor, who very soon made him Minister of the Interior, a post created to relieve the Chief Minister.

Professor Proser-Toady said we should obtain the clearest conception of Prince Mechow's views and the best key to his policy in a volume of correspondence with his cousin General Count Block. Count Block, like many of his military colleagues, was alarmed at the general confusion. He declared there was nothing for it but to sweep away all popular representative institutions, restrict education to the upper classes and fall back upon the direct rule of the military. Prince Mechow pointed out that such a policy would fail utterly: it would bring about the very revolution it sought to avoid. Efficiency could never be created by the military alone. Industrial efficiency was absolutely necessary to military power. He agreed in the main with Count Block's objects, but declared that his means were clumsy and inadequate. The work of Prince Bludiron must be continued by the creation of a Super-State. The *term* had already been coined, but the *thing* did not yet exist.

It is in Prince Mechow's clear conception of the Super-State that we see his intellectual genius, but it is in the steps he took to bring it into being that we realise his kinship with his famous predecessor, Prince Bludiron. Prince Bludiron had had to live from hand to mouth relying upon his statesman's instinct. Prince Mechow, even before he became Chief Minister, foresaw every detail of the structure he was determined to erect.

The State, he said, has hitherto done only what is forced upon it by necessity. It has never attempted to utilise the whole energies of the Nation. The Super-State will only come into being by uniting in itself the will, the knowledge, the wisdom, and the multifarious energies, of the whole people. The State has been merely the strongest organ of society: the Super-State must be the only organ, uniting all others in itself.

How was such a conception to be realised concretely? In explaining his plans he found ample illustration in the circumstances of the recent Great War. The State had not only controlled everything essential to the conduct of the war; it had not only regulated the manufacture of all supplies, including food and clothing for the whole nation, but had undertaken a thousand activities never previously dreamt of, except by the Socialists.

He proposed to capture the whole armoury of the Socialists by gradually seizing everything for the State itself. The motto of the Super-State must be Efficiency. But to be efficient the State must absorb all the persons who represented efficiency. The whole conception of Bureaucracy must be revolutionised by being carried to its logical conclusion. The efficiency of a business firm depends upon the efficiency of the persons composing it. The efficiency of the Super-State will depend upon the efficiency of the new Bureaucracy and the Military Class. There was no instance in history of an efficient Government being overthrown by any popular forces.

A century of industrial development had transformed the material world, whilst in the meantime the organisation of the State had almost stood still. The Super-State must borrow from the Socialists the conception of an all-embracing power and activity, and from the Industrial world the machinery for the execution of its will. The most efficient and successful business firms were those which got every ounce of work out of every member of the firm. The Super-State must not be less resourceful.

Now as to the methods, said the Professor. How was the State to absorb into its service all the energies of the nation, without at the same time becoming a Social Democracy? Already the Social Democrats, as in Prince Bludiron's time, were proclaiming that the Capitalist State was working out for them the Social Revolution predicted by Spotts; and as in Prince Bludiron's days so under Prince Mechow they went on waiting for the Social Revolution. They are waiting still. In the meantime Prince Mechow got into the saddle and began his practical reforms. He was a man of the most extraordinary energy and versatility. He was not content to begin with Education and wait for a generation. He attacked a dozen different problems at the same time: Education, Industry, Commerce, Railways, Finance, the Press, the Stage, the Professions, the Church—every side of national life received his attention; but the prime instrument through which he worked was the Bureaucracy. He laid it down as an axiom that the machinery of the State must work so smoothly that the people should be unaware of its operations.

There have been instances in history, he wrote in one of his letters, in which a Government has been overturned in a single day. How? By a perfectly planned *coup d'état*. What can be accomplished on a single occasion can be done as a part of the regular working of the State Machinery. Our Super-State must be capable of a *coup d'état* every day. Those of his friends who did not see the necessity for his reforms he silenced by showing them that if they did not capture the State the Social Democracy would do so.

During the first ten years of his regime he worked wonders. He renewed the State control of all the large industries. He took into the service of the State all the most capable business men and manufacturers, all the best scientists and engineers as well as the best administrators. The Censorship of the Press was continued and extended to every form of literature. He bought up all the big newspapers and drove all the little ones into bankruptcy. When every clever journalist was engaged on the State newspapers and all advertisements were controlled, there was not much room for an 'opposition' Press. The Schools and Universities were already well under control, but he revised the whole system. He made every teacher and every professor a direct servant of the State. Every textbook was revised. He paid particular attention to history, philosophy and literature. The new generation were thus educated in an atmosphere calculated to cultivate the true Meccanian spirit. Inspectors, organisers and directors of Education infused new energy into the system and trained the whole population to co-operate with the Super-State.

As to the proletariat, he saw to it that there was no unemployment. Production went up by leaps and bounds, wages were increased, but there was no waste. Goods that could not be disposed of immediately were stored, but methods of control and regulation were introduced to direct industry into the right channels. Whilst he controlled the wage-earners he at the same time controlled the employers. All surplus wages and profits were invested in the State funds.

Of course there was opposition to these reforms. The Military Class were slow to understand his methods, so he established periodical military councils, took them into his confidence and eventually won them over completely. As for the Social Democrats, he did not scruple to employ against them the same methods they would have employed against him. He made use of secret agents to preach the doctrine that by his methods the way would be prepared for the social revolution. When at length he inaugurated the system of the seven social classes the Social Democrats professed to see in this a means of stimulating class consciousness; but after a few years they discovered that no class was willing to surrender its privileges. The Fifth Class, which includes the most skilled artisans in Europe, began to see that no revolution would improve their position, whilst it might lower them to the level of the Sixth or Seventh Class. The boasted solidarity of the proletariat proved to be an illusion, like most of Spotts's ideas.

When he reformed the railway system he made travelling free. But of course if travelling were to be free, restrictions must be imposed. Similarly in regard to housing. He applied all the technical knowledge in the country to the problem. Standardised houses and other devices made it possible to rebuild any portions of our cities and to transfer population from one region to another with the greatest ease. On the other hand, restrictions were necessary. You cannot have free trade in houses and at the same time guarantee a house to every family.

I have condensed Dr. Proser-Toady's lecture, which lasted several hours, into such short compass that it gives very little idea, I am afraid, of the complete revolution worked out by Prince Mechow's reforms. For instance, he showed how the whole character of politics had been transformed, how the questions that agitated Meccania sixty years ago had entirely disappeared; how the Press no longer existed, because its functions had been absorbed by other agencies; how the Parliament, which I was surprised to hear still existed, was now organised to correspond with the seven social classes; how the State was so wealthy that control over taxation was no longer necessary.

He ended with a remarkable passage about the seven social classes and the national Meccanian uniforms.

"Many Foreign Observers," he said, "in times past, have made merry over our sevenfold classification and our national costumes. What have other nations to put in their place? They too have these classes, for they are natural and inevitable. They have their nobles, their soldiers, their officials and professional men, their bourgeoisie, their artisans, their labourers and their degraded 'submerged tenth.' But they are afraid to call them by their proper names, afraid to recognise them. They have no uniforms, no dignified and pleasing costumes; but you never mistake one class for another. You never mistake the labourer for the wealthy bourgeois or the popinjay aristocrat. Nowhere else, they say, would people consent to wear the servile badge of their caste. We Meccanians are proud of our seven national colours. So far from being a degradation, the historical origin of the costumes proves that it is a privilege to wear them. The seven uniforms were once the ceremonial dress of the seven guilds established by Prince Mechow. When permission was granted for all the members of the classes to wear the ceremonial dress it was the occasion of national rejoicings everywhere. The national costumes are part of the Ritual of the Super-State."

Long-winded as some parts of the lecture were, I must confess it was most illuminating, and to me, as a student of politics and sociology, exceedingly interesting. I begin to understand now what the Meccanian Super-State really is.

CHAPTER V

CULTURE IN MECCO

DURING the first few weeks of my tour in Mecco—Tour No. 4—Conductor Prigge kept my nose well to the grindstone. At times he made me feel like a small schoolboy, at times like a prisoner in charge of a warder. It would be tedious to detail all the incidents of my daily rounds, or to describe everything in the exact order in which it was presented to my view. So I propose to set down, as they remain in my mind, the most interesting or remarkable features of this truly remarkable city. One circumstance, however, annoys and almost distresses me. I cannot get into contact with any individual living people. I see everything as a spectacle from the outside.

As I go about, the impression of orderliness, cleanliness, and even magnificence of a kind, is such as I have seldom felt in any part of the world. At times the whole city gives one the same sort of feeling that one experiences in going through a gigantic hospital, where everything is spotless and nothing is out of its place. I am even getting used to the coloured uniforms of the seven classes. In the central parts of the city green and yellow predominate; for the number of people belonging to the official class is enormous. Even apart from their actual number they are the most conspicuous, because the lower classes are at work in their factories and business houses, and are consequently seldom seen except when returning home in the evening. Occasionally I notice a few white uniforms (of the very select First Class) and occasionally, too, a crowd of officers in their brilliant scarlet uniforms. At the other end of the scale, the most common colour visible is the grey, worn by the numerous servants in the well-to-do quarters. The few servants who wear chocolate are mostly the lackeys of the very rich, and the upper servants in the large hotels.

On the day after Dr. Proser-Toady's lecture, Conductor Prigge was more than usually "pedagogic." I wanted to look about the streets and ask questions about many things that occurred to me at the moment, but he insisted upon pouring out detailed information about the drainage system, the postal areas, the parcels' delivery areas, the telephone system, the market system, and so forth. What did interest me, however, was the organisation known as the Time Department, of which I had already seen something at Bridgetown.

There is, as I have said, an enormous number of public buildings in Mecco, but nobody can miss the gigantic office of the Time Department. It towers up, about seven stories high, over the surrounding buildings, and above it rises a great clock that can be seen for miles. In this central department alone, ten thousand people are employed—that is, of course, in addition to all those employed in the local offices of the Time Department in various parts of the country.

Conductor Prigge was tremendously proud of the Time Department. " Other nations," he said, " have never thought of establishing such an institution for themselves. They have not even had the intelligence to imitate ours. We Meccanians were the first to discover both time and space : our philosophers were the first to understand time and space : we have been the first Government to organise time and space. We can tell you," he went on, " the exact amount of time occupied by any person, or any group of persons, in doing anything. We know exactly how much time is devoted to eating and drinking, as well as the time required to produce a picture, or a piece of sculpture, or a poem, or a musical composition ; or how long it takes to learn any language, or any subject of study."

" But," I said, " what about the time spent by all the clerks and officials employed all over the country, as well as here, in the Time Department itself ; isn't it rather extravagant ? What is the object of it all ? "

" Do you think," he replied, " that we should keep up such an institution if it had not proved to be useful in the highest degree? Foreigners have such childish ideas of organisation," he continued. "This was one of the most brilliant inventions of Prince Mechow, but it has taken thirty years to bring it to its present state of perfection. It pays for itself over and over again, in the mere economy it effects; and it has other far-reaching effects on the whole social and economic life of the nation. In the first place, in the matter of material production, in every trade and occupation it enables us to speed-up scientifically. An increase of 1½ per cent in the productiveness of the four main industries alone would more than pay all the expenses of the Time Department. We have increased productiveness all round by at least 20 per cent since the introduction of the Time Department; and although not all of this increase is due to the Time Department, we may safely reckon 5 per cent. We have done away with all the dawdlers in art, all the incompetent painters and novelists and poets. In connection with the Post Office we have been able to diminish the amount of time spent in writing useless letters by 50 per cent. Why, without the Time Department the Department for the Direction of Leisure would be helpless. In Education, how should we know the right proportion of time to be devoted to the various subjects, the right amount to recreation or amusement? And apart from economy, the aid given to the researches of the

Sociological Department is simply invaluable. The efficiency of the Police Department is due in great measure to the Time Department."

" But," I inquired innocently, " is there no feeling of resentment on the part of the public at the somewhat inquisitorial methods of the Time Department ? "

" Resentment ! " he said, almost angrily. " Why should there be resentment ? "

" At having to give an account of all that one does even in one's leisure time ? "

" But when everybody knows that we save millions a year by it, and when the State has decided that it is for the public benefit, and the obligation is imposed upon everybody ; why should anyone raise objections ? "

" Still," I said, remembering my unfortunate experience, " you find it necessary to inflict fines in order to ensure compliance with the regulations about filling up the weekly diaries."

" Naturally. But perhaps you overlook the educative effect of having to keep the diary. The proper keeping of the diary is almost an education in itself." My conductor said this with such an air of finality that I thought it was not worth while to pursue the question further.

I was much amused by a conversation I had a few days ago on another subject. It was about five o'clock and I was feeling rather tired, so I proposed that we should have a meal in a restaurant, and then go to some place of amusement in the evening.

"You may return to the hotel if you are indisposed," said Prigge, "and rest there during the evening; or you may have a meal in a restaurant and resume your tour. But until we have completed at least the first week's tour of observation, you cannot possibly be permitted to visit any place of amusement, as you call it. Besides, such places as you probably have in mind, do not exist in Mecco. I have seen, in other countries, what are termed music halls, where a lot of so-called actors were making fools of themselves."

"Perhaps," I ventured to say, "you did not look at the performance from the right point of view."

"I see! You mean that I should have regarded these childish performances as illustrating the stage of mental culture of the people. From that point of view your 'music halls' may be of some interest, just as the drama of foreign countries is of interest; but it is so very primitive."

"Primitive? In what way primitive?" I asked.

"Primitive by comparison with our highly developed drama. For example, all the foreign dramas I have seen are written in the narrative form, or rather, I should say, the drama is still in the chronological stage. We have left that behind."

"Indeed," I said, "I am afraid I can hardly conceive of drama in any other form."

"Exactly. *You* cannot understand. But our

Meccanian culture is not exactly designed for the intelligence of foreigners. If you are specially interested in the subject of the drama—it is not one of my specialities, although of course I am not ignorant of the drama, no Meccanian is—I will introduce you to my friend in the Department of Public Amusement, which is a branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. He will probably enable you in the shortest period of time—and that is always a consideration, although most foreigners are often quite oblivious of the time aspect of such matters—to understand the Meccanian drama, in so far as it is possible for a foreigner to understand it."

I thanked him, and he made a note in his pocket-book to remind him of his promise. "Perhaps you can tell me," I said, "how your people do amuse themselves, apart from going to the theatre; for they cannot go to the theatre every evening."

"I notice that, like all foreigners, you are more interested in amusement than in the serious aspects of life. You will receive full information at the proper time if you will avail yourself of my offer to take you to my friend Dr. Dodderer, the Sub-Controller of Public Amusements (Section B); but I do not mind giving you a few facts such as are common knowledge among all Meccanians."

"Well," I said, "take your commercial travellers, who must spend a good deal of time in towns away from home. What do they do in the evenings?"

"If you were to go to the Great Meccanian

Library," he replied, "and consult the Reports of the Sociological Department for the last twenty years, you would be able to see exactly how all these persons have spent their time. But you would perhaps be surprised to find that the number of persons travelling about and staying away from home is very small. When you have studied our industrial and commercial system you will see that we require comparatively few commercial travellers. As to the way they spend their time, you must understand that in every town there are guilds of all the professions. Consequently, as every commercial traveller naturally wishes to improve his knowledge, he frequents the guild house, where he meets with other members of his profession and discusses matters of interest. If he comes from Mecco he will be welcomed, as the provincial members will be only too glad to learn anything from one who comes from the very centre of Meccanian culture. Also, he may wish to visit the local museums, or other cultural institutions. If not, he will attend either an outdoor or an indoor concert."

"The commercial travellers of Meccania must be quite unlike the commercial travellers of all other countries if they spend their leisure in the way you have described," I remarked. "You spoke of concerts," I continued. "I suppose music is still the most popular form of amusement in Meccania ? "

"Neither the drama nor music are, strictly speaking, mere amusements," answered Conductor Prigge. "They may be so regarded in other countries, but not in Meccania."

"Then what are they ?" I asked.

"They form part of our general scheme of culture," replied Prigge. "As you probably know, attendance at the theatre once a week is compulsory for all persons over eighteen. Those below eighteen attend the juvenile theatre as part of their school course in literature."

"Attendance compulsory ?" I said. "But if Meccanians are so advanced in the cultivation of the drama, why should it be necessary to enforce attendance ?"

"Perhaps it is not really necessary, but I doubt whether our scheme of dramatic culture could be carried out without strict regulation. For instance, there are some plays more popular than others. People would want to see these plays in great numbers and there would not be room for them ; whilst the less popular plays would not be well attended."

"Just so," I said, "that is what one would naturally expect ; and where is the harm ?"

"Our scheme provides a succession of plays throughout the year, all designed as part of our culture, and if people were at liberty to pick and choose what they would see, and what they would not see, we should have no guarantee that they would have gone through the course."

"Would that matter," I asked, "so long as they were amused?"

"May I repeat that the Meccanian drama is something more than amusement," he replied testily. "You will learn more of this subject from Dr. Dodderer. We need not pursue it further."

"Then may I ask whether attendance at concerts is compulsory also?"

"It is not compulsory, but it is strictly regulated as regards the different grades of music," he answered.

"I should like to know how you regulate attendance at concerts," I said; "I have never heard of it elsewhere."

"I dare say not," said Prigge. "Other countries are still in a very backward state as regards musical culture. In the first place, all persons below eighteen have to pass an examination in some branch of practical or theoretical music, unless they are defective in the musical sense. Then, before any adult is admitted to the first, second or third grades of concerts, he has to pass an examination in musical appreciation. That is to say, only those are admitted to concerts of the first class who hold a first-class certificate in musical appreciation, and so on with the other grades. Otherwise we should have people whose musical knowledge is very moderate listening to the best music by the best performers. By means of our system we can provide exactly the right standard of music at all public concerts. At the beginning of each season the programmes of all the concerts of the first three grades are issued. Each person enters his name for a course of concerts according to the grade of musical culture attained by him. He is informed how many concerts he may attend in the season; he then chooses which concerts he will attend, and after that there is no difficulty."

"No," said I, "I should think there would be no difficulty after such careful preparation. Then the open-air concerts in the beer gardens," I said; "where do they come in?"

"Those are not regulated in the same way. We can tell from the Time Department whether any person is spending too much time at these performances, and any person who neglects to pass his examination in musical appreciation before the age of thirty is forbidden to attend such concerts—if they can be called concerts—more than once a week."

"And is it possible to carry out such a regulation?" I asked.

"You have not studied our Time Department to much purpose if you ask such a question," answered Prigge.

"I suppose, then," I said, "as I have no certificate I shall not be permitted to hear any of your best music?"

"Foreigners who are Doctors of Music of any University," replied Prigge, "are admitted by special leave of the Ministry of Culture to attend a specified number of concerts even of the first grade, and others can attend a few concerts of the third grade, likewise by special permission of the Ministry of Culture."

I think it was on the same day that Prigge said to me, "I notice you are not wearing your spectacles."

"I have never worn spectacles," I said.

"But you were ordered to wear spectacles by Dr. Pincher."

"He did prescribe them," I said, "but I have not troubled to get them, as I do not really require them."

Conductor Prigge looked positively aghast. "You must go at once," he said; "you have the address. You had better pretend that there has been some delay—but no, your diary will show that you have not been to the optician. You will certainly be fined in accordance with Regulation 127 of the Instructions to Foreign Observers."

I went accordingly, and in a few days I had the spectacles. I suppose this incident caused me to notice that nearly all Meccanians wear spectacles or eyeglasses. Some wear two pairs at once, and I have seen even three pairs worn. I felt thankful nothing wrong with my teeth had been discovered.

A day or two later I was taken by Prigge to see Dr. Dodderer. What I learnt from him was even more remarkable than what my conductor had told me, so I will not apologise for giving a fairly full account of my interview.

We were due at ten o'clock, and a whole hour had been reserved for me. As we entered his room he noted the exact time on his tablet and said, "The object of your visit is to learn something of the Meccanian drama, as part of the system of culture, and the relation of amusement to our system of culture. Very good; if you will be seated I will do my best to enlighten you."

He was a dried-up little man, with bright black eyes and a narrow but lofty forehead. I thanked him and prepared to listen. I knew he would think me disrespectful if I did not make use of my notebook, so I prepared to make copious notes.

When he saw I was ready, he sat with his eyes shut and his hands clasped together in front of him, and proceeded to pour forth a long discourse. He began by saying that all the higher animals showed some disposition towards play; and that, in particular, the human animal was pre-eminently distinguished in this respect. Some anthropologists had argued that the persistence of the play-instinct was a proof of the essential usefulness of play, in developing both muscular and intellectual power. He himself did not adopt this view, or, at any rate, only in a modified form. He held that play was one of the most wasteful methods of nature, and that if the competition between the various races and subdivisions of the human species had been perfect, the race that could reduce play to an absolute minimum, confined perhaps to the first three years of life, would—*ceteris paribus*—succeed in winning the foremost place. Play was certainly the least profitable form of mental activity, and one of the problems of education was the gradual elimination of play from the scheme of national culture. It was unfortunately true that even the best system of education had to make concessions to this instinct of play, and it would take many generations before it could be reduced to a minimum. But the experiments of the Meccanian psychologists had demonstrated that the amount necessary, both in the case of children and in the case of adults, had been grossly exaggerated in the past, and was still grossly exaggerated by other nations. These experiments would have been impossible without the assistance of the Time Department, and the absence of a Time Department in other countries probably accounted for the little progress they had made in this direction.

"For example," he continued, "other nations have almost entirely neglected the value of cultural toys. They have been content, even where they have given any thought at all to the subject, to devise toys which gave a little more opportunity for ingenuity, but their object has been mainly to amuse; they have had no clear conception of the ultimate purpose of toys in a complete cultural scheme. Now we have a carefully thought-out scheme, and although it does not come under my department, but under Section A1, it affords a good illustration of the basis of our system. All our toys are classified in fifteen stages. We began with only five stages, but the number has gradually increased, for the system necessarily becomes more complex as it becomes more perfect. Stage I. is represented by simple objects which a baby can grasp and recognise before the age of eighteen months. Stage II. is represented by balls and cubes and objects of that order. Stage III. by dolls and images. Stage IV. by objects which can be grouped so as to afford a basis for the teaching of number. Stage V. by simple mechanical toys and simple tools. Stage VI. by constructive blocks of various kinds. . . ."

Here, I am afraid, I became confused, but I remember that Stage XIII. was represented by toys which formed an introduction to chemistry, and that the toys of Stage XIV. could only be worked by boys whose mathematical knowledge was far in advance of what I should have thought possible. He explained that visits were paid by the domestic Inspectors of Child-Life to see that the parents made proper use of the system of cultural toys. There had been great difficulty at first, but the parents were now properly instructed; and in a short time there would be no need to instruct them, as they would have grown up in familiarity with the system.

"Other experiments equally valuable have been conducted in order to discover what forms of amusement are most profitable from the cultural point of view; these include experiments designed to improve production.

"For example, in our schools for the children of the Seventh Class, we find we have to allow a considerable time for non-intellectual pursuits. It would be sheer waste to allow all this time to be given to mere amusement. Children who cannot give more than three hours a day to study, can be very usefully employed in making simple articles. We have a number of simple machines which can be worked by quite small children. You would be surprised to learn, perhaps, that goods worth a million are exported annually which are all the product of the semi-recreative work of these children. On the other hand, any boys of the *Second* Class who cannot profitably be kept at intellectual pursuits for more than a few hours a day, are trained to be active and bold and self-reliant in preparation for their military career.

"The same principle applies not only to children at school but to people of all ages. For example, we discovered, through our Time Department again, that thousands of men were wasting precious hours upon games such as chess. We have introduced mathematical exercises of an interesting kind as a substitute, with most beneficial results. Others were addicted to aimless walks and rambles in the country. We began by offering prizes for botanical, entomological and other specimens, and for essays upon scientific subjects. We have, in fact, almost eliminated aimless amusement from the life of our common people. In the Fifth Class, which is a highly intelligent class, we encourage the pursuit of science by promoting those who pass certain examinations, which include a thesis, to the first grade of their class, and in a few cases we are able to promote exceptionally promising young men to the Fourth Class."

" In what way does this bear upon the drama ? " I said in a pause in Dr. Dodderer's discourse.

" I have been trying to show you the basis of our system of public amusement. With us, amusement is never an end in itself. We find a certain crude kind of interest in the drama, or shall I say in the theatre, in almost all peoples, and some of the greatest poets have utilised that interest in order to reach the minds of their hearers. The greatest poets are those who have conceded least to the mere instinct for amusement. We have followed the same principle. But we could not carry out this scheme of dramatic culture without first getting control over the theatre. Prince Mechow, with his usual insight, saw that it was useless to control and direct the Press, if he did not at the same time control and direct the Theatre. First of all he made the censorship a reality. Then he took all the most popular playwrights into the

State service. Then he was able to weed out those who were incapable of entering into his purpose. Gradually all the theatres became cultural institutions of the State. All this took time, of course. Even now there are a few popular theatres where only the lower kinds of dramatic varieties are performed. Attendance at these is not compulsory."

"I do not yet understand," I said, "why it should be necessary to make attendance compulsory when the drama is so popular."

"For the majority of the people," replied Dr. Dodderer, "compulsion is quite unnecessary; but it is just those who are most in need of the culture that can be given through the medium of the drama who would be lax in their attendance. The whole subject has been investigated," he continued, "by the aid of the Time Department, and we are satisfied that we get the best results through our present system."

"Since your playwrights became Civil servants has there been no decline in the quality of your dramatic productions?" I asked.

"On the contrary," replied Dr. Dodderer. "Our modern plays are on a much higher level. There are several reasons for this. In the first place, in the old days the uninstructed public were hardly fit judges of dramatic or literary excellence. They often preferred plays of little cultural value. Consequently, the men who could write really good plays often found it impossible to get them produced. Our Board of Dramatic Criticism is now able to decide the merits of all plays, and the dramatists are quite independent of the caprice of the public. Also, we can carry specialisation to a point undreamt of in former times."

"Specialisation ?" I said; "that is quite a new idea to me."

"Naturally, there are writers who have plenty of ingenuity in devising plots, but who are lacking in literary style; others who write excellent Meccanian, both prose and verse, but who are weak in the dramatic instinct. It is, in fact, very seldom that a modern Meccanian drama is the sole work of any single author. Moreover, the drama as developed by us lends itself particularly to specialisation. For example, most of our classical plays are presented in four phases. The simplest phase comes first. The subject is presented in chronological-dramatic form, somewhat resembling the dramas of other days and other countries. Next comes the analytical phase, and after that the synthetic. The last phase or act is a complete philosophical symposium in which the whole subject is presented in its highest and most abstract form."

"When you speak of the subject of a play, what do you mean exactly ?" I asked.

"The old plays had often no real subject; they had titles, it is true, but these titles were mere names of persons, or mere names of places or incidents. What, for instance, can you make of a title such as *Julius Cæsar*? or *The Emperor of the East*? or *Catherine*? or *The Tyrant of Genoa*? or *The Crime of Boniface*? If you are acquainted with the development of the drama, you will know that about ninety years ago a great advance was made by means of what was then called 'The Problem Play.' Some of these plays had a real subject. We have gone much further, of course. Take the subjects of some of our best-known plays: *Efficiency, Inefficiency, National Self-Consciousness.* These are all by our Chief Dramatic-Composer Grubber. His latest play, *Uric Acid*, is in my opinion even better than these."

"*Uric Acid*!" I exclaimed; "what an extraordinary subject!"

"It is one of a series of medical plays," explained Dr. Dodderer, quite undisturbed. "The subject lends itself splendidly to the methods of Meccanian Art. The part played by uric acid in the life of the individual, the family, the State, treated physiologically, pathologically, sociologically, ethically and philosophically, is almost infinite in its possibilities, and Grubber has made the most of them."

"And do the public enjoy these medical plays?"

"You appear to be obsessed, if I may say so," replied Dr. Dodderer, "with the idea of enjoyment. You must bear in mind our standpoint, which I have already explained. But certainly the public take great interest in the medical plays. Sub-Dramatist Smellie wrote a series, *Phthisis, Nephritis* and *Meningitis,* which are almost equal to Grubber's *Uric Acid,* but he fails a little in the higher aspects of the subject, and consequently his fourth acts fall short of the highest philosophical perfection. I remember reading the proofs of his first play, *Gall Stones.* It was excellent until he came to the philosophical phase. It reminded me of an older play produced in the transition period, some fifty years ago, called *The Blind and the Deaf.* It had a considerable vogue for several years, but you see from its title that the conception was not fully developed."

"These medical plays," I said, "are not the most typical productions of the dramatic genius of modern Meccania, I suppose ?"

"In some ways they are," replied Dr. Dodderer. "That is to say, they are almost peculiar to our country. But one of our younger playwrights has developed the subject of economics in a way almost equally unique. His *Significance of Food,* and his *Insurance,* and *Distribution,* are a mere introduction to his masterpiece, *Value.* A very slight work on *Inaccuracy,* which was almost a farce, first attracted the attention of the Board of Criticism. They refused to produce *Inaccuracy* in its original form, and he embodied it in a more mature work, *Production,* which was the first of his genuine economic plays."

" I suppose, then, you have historical or at least political plays ? "

" Historical plays are mostly performed in the juvenile theatres," he said. " I have very little to do with them. They fall under Section A, and, as you know, I am the Sub-Controller of Section B," replied Dodderer. " But," he continued, " we have a certain number of more advanced historical plays for adults. For instance, *The Evolution of Society*, with its sequel, *The Triumph of Meccania*, are excellent historical plays. Political plays have become almost obsolete, but there are still a few produced occasionally. *The Principle of Monarchy* is still quite a classic in its way, and *The Futility of Democracy* is one of the most brilliant pieces of Meccanian satire. *Obedience* is another classic."

" It seems to me a very remarkable fact that your Sixth and Seventh Classes should be able to appreciate such plays as those you have been describing," I said, " especially in parts of the country which cannot be so far advanced as the capital."

" I do not say that they appreciate the drama in the same degree as the more educated classes ; but you must remember they have gone through a long course of training. You perhaps now appreciate our wisdom in making attendance compulsory. Without regularity in attendance we could not arrange for a proper sequence of plays.

Also, I must admit that on the days when the Sixth and Seventh Classes are due to attend, we put on the less advanced plays as a rule."

"What happens," I asked, "to the old plays which were written, say, a hundred years ago; are they never performed?"

"Oh dear, yes," replied Dr. Dodderer; "the performance of such plays forms a regular part of the literature course at all our Universities and Colleges. We also utilise quite a number of them in the courses of plays for the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Classes; but the form in which they are written is so simple and childish, such a contrast to the ripe perfection of the fully developed Meccanian drama."

"It must be a difficult matter," I remarked, "to arrange for progressive courses of plays for so many people as you have in Mecco."

"On the contrary, the larger the city the easier it is. Members of the Third Class and, of course, of higher classes, are considered capable of appreciating all kinds of plays. Class Four consists of four grades, and the two higher grades, all the members of which are over thirty, are likewise eligible to attend any plays. We have a very simple plan of classifying all the others. At the age of eighteen they are all at liberty to attend plays which are classed as Stage I.; then after six months any one is at liberty to apply for a certificate entitling him to attend plays in Stage II. After another year they can obtain a certificate for Stage III.; and so on. We seldom refuse an application, and in fact we rather encourage our people to advance, otherwise many people would be content to remain in Stage II., or Stage III., all their lives. Then, at the beginning of each season, we know how many to provide for in each class, and at each stage; and the greater the number of theatres the easier it is to arrange the plays accordingly."

"What about the actors?" I asked. "In most countries the leading actors are very much sought after, and can make large fortunes. I should imagine your system does not allow of that kind of career for a successful actor."

"All our actors," replied Dr. Dodderer, "are trained in the Imperial Meccanian Dramatic College. The lower grades belong to the Fifth Class, the higher grades to the Fourth. The technique of acting has been brought to such perfection that the 'star' as he used to be called, has entirely disappeared. There is no room for him in our system. The 'star' was a mere product of popular enthusiasm."

"How do you judge, then, of the popularity of any particular actor?"

"We take no account of it at all," replied Dr. Dodderer. "Our expert Board of Dramatic Criticism determines the standing of each actor. We have, of course, expert psychologists, who are able to test the particular psychological effect both of each phase of the play and of the impression made by individual actors. Their experiments are of great value both to our dramatic managers and to the writers of plays."

At this point Dr. Dodderer announced that the hour he had reserved for me was at an end.

CHAPTER VI

MORE CULTURE IN MECCO

I RETURNED to Conductor Prigge and my daily grind. But as most of this first period was spent in visiting systematically a number of institutions similar to those I had seen in Bridgetown, but on a larger scale, it is hardly necessary to describe them here. For instance, the arrangements for receiving and distributing food are on the same principle: the markets are managed in the same way. The general system of shopping is the same, except that, as the city is much larger, there is very much more 'shopping by post.' As the shops are not permitted to display anything in shop windows, nor to advertise except in the trade gazettes and catalogues, there is not much incentive to spend time in desultory shopping. The great Stores are more like warehouses than shops. I had gathered from my conversations with Sheep that the State seemed to place obstacles in the way of personal expenditure, and yet at the same time production was encouraged. Sheep's explanations had not seemed to me entirely satisfactory, so I decided to question Prigge on this interesting point. As his services were charged for at double the rate of Sheep's, I thought I ought to get more complete information from him. So one day I said to him, "How is it that in Meccania, as far as I can judge, you have brought production to such a pitch of perfection—I mean as regards the enormous quantities manufactured—whilst at the same time you seem to restrict expenditure or consumption in so many ways ?"

Prigge tilted back his head and put on his professorial air.

"Such a question would be better dealt with when you come to make a definite study of our National Economy, but as it is really quite an elementary question—a commonplace of all our textbooks—I do not mind explaining it briefly now. Your first error is in supposing that the State encourages production indiscriminately. We produce what we require and no more, but we are able to measure our requirements better than other nations. In other countries people are allowed to buy a lot of things they do not require ; this causes unnecessary production, of course. Unregulated consumption gives rise to unregulated production."

I still felt puzzled as to what became of the wealth produced by the wonderfully efficient system of wholesale production, for, as far as I could tell, the people seemed less luxurious in their habits than those of countries far less advanced in machine production. But I felt I should be getting on dangerous ground, and forbore.

The commercial quarter, in which we spent a whole day, was remarkably small for so large a city, especially considering that the city is not commercially self-contained. But I learnt that Mecco is not really the commercial centre of Meccania. The merchants are little more than the agents for the distribution of goods. The quantities are largely fixed by the Department of Industry and Commerce, consequently there is not much room for enterprise, except in effecting economies in distribution, in bargaining with the Government as to the kinds of goods to be produced, and in discussing with manufacturers matters of detail as to patterns and styles. For example, the Schools of Art produce every year designs for cloth for women's dress. The merchants select from these the patterns to be manufactured. There is little excitement in a merchant's career. Most of the clerks seem to be occupied in the preparation and revision of catalogues, which are the substitute for advertisements. No new article can be produced until it has been approved by the Improvements Section of the Department of Industry and Commerce.

All this side of the life of Mecco was very tame and stereotyped. Prigge discoursed at length on the merits of the Post Office and all its works, but the only remarkable thing I noticed about it, besides the censorship of letters, and the enormous number of people employed, was the ingenious arrangement whereby a conversation carried on in any part of Meccania could be overheard at the Central Office.

The absence of life and bustle in the streets was as striking as in Bridgetown. Most of the people in the Government offices belonged to the Fourth Class, and as these all lived in the two quarters running north and south of the central ring, they could reach their offices in a very short time. The midday meal was taken in a canteen within the office. The few inferior employees, messengers, porters, cleaners, etc., who belonged to the Fifth or Sixth Class, lived almost as near. The higher Civil servants of the Third Class, who of course were less numerous, did not make a crowd in the street. The green uniforms of the Fourth Class were the most conspicuous object everywhere. The industrial classes, living as they do on the side nearest the industrial town, are transported by an ingenious system of trams and underground and overhead railways, so that in half an hour they can all get from their homes to their work, where they remain all day. All goods arriving from the industrial town for distribution to the Stores are carried by a regular service of motor-vans. The distribution of goods to houses is so systematised as to require comparatively few vehicles. For instance, certain kinds of goods can be delivered only once a month for each household, others only once a week. Consequently one sees a perfectly regular stream of traffic, which is never very dense and never congested. All this might have been very interesting to a student of municipal socialism and mechanical organisation, but my chief interests lay in other directions, and it was not until we came to the cultural institutions that I found things so remarkable, at any rate from my own point of view, that I shall make no apology for describing them with some fullness here, even at the risk of being tedious to those who think more of locomotion than of liberty, or who regard the Post Office as the highest symbol of civilisation.

I had looked forward with some curiosity to my first visit to a Meccanian Art Gallery, for, as I had not been into any private houses, and as there are no shop windows, I had seen hardly any signs of Meccanian Art Culture, except in Architecture. The decorative work in the public buildings did not impress me favourably. It was Patriotic Art, executed by the students of the Imperial Meccanian Academy.

Prigge announced that, as he had been promoted to a higher grade in the Police Service, he would no longer be available to conduct me. By way of consoling me for the deprivation he said that in any case I should have to be handed over to various specialist conductors, as I had almost completed the general part of my tour and had reached the stage when I should have to begin the study of definite branches of Meccanian culture. He had consequently arranged for me to spend the first three days in the Great Meccanian Gallery under the guidance of Specialist Art Section Sub-Conductor Musch.

Sub-Conductor Musch met me at the appointed time at the hotel. He was a very different type from Prigge. He was much less of the drill-sergeant; in fact he looked rather 'decadent,' if a Meccanian can be decadent. He spoke in a soft voice, which was quite a contrast to the leathery voices of most officials I had encountered previously. He began by saying that before we actually began our inspection of the pictures there were certain preliminaries.

The Great Meccanian Gallery, he said, was the temple of all that was sacred in the æsthetic world. I must be properly prepared for it, so that I could concentrate my attention upon what I saw and not be distracted by having to ask questions about extraneous matters. If I would pay careful attention he would describe the general arrangements.

"The Great Meccanian Gallery," he said, "is one of the four galleries in Mecco; the other three are subsidiary. The first gallery is devoted to the old historical collections that existed before the time of Prince Mechow, and contains only foreign pictures. The second gallery contains Meccanian pictures of a date previous to the foundation of the Great Meccanian Gallery by Prince Mechow. The fourth gallery contains foreign pictures contemporary with those in the Great Meccanian

Gallery. And now we come to the Great Meccanian Gallery itself.

"Every picture in that gallery is an expression of the Meccanian spirit; otherwise it is not admitted. Its technique must also satisfy the Board of Art of the Department of Culture. Consequently, as soon as you enter you are in the atmosphere of pure Meccanian Art. Previous to the creation of this gallery, the influence of Art was rather de-nationalising. The æsthetic sense was cultivated in total ignorance of the possibility of marrying it to the Meccanian spirit. The Meccanian spirit is the active, creative male; the æsthetic sense is receptive, conceptive, essentially female. Of the two, Meccanian Art is born."

He went on in this style for several minutes until I thought I had better get something more definite from him for my 'guidance.' So I said, "How does one tell whether a picture is an expression of the Meccanian spirit?"

"To the true Meccanian, all things truly Meccanian are sacred, and by the inward cultivation of the sense of reverence for what is most characteristically Meccanian he arrives at a certainty which is incommunicable to others."

"But suppose opinion is divided. Suppose, for example, one man says, here is a picture which is full of the Meccanian spirit, and another man says the contrary."

Musch smiled in a sad, superior way, by which I saw that after all, in spite of his ‘decadence,’ he was a true Meccanian. “You are evidently not well acquainted with either Meccanian history or philosophy,” he said. “Even our early philosophers taught that the Meccanian spirit must embody itself in institutions or it would evaporate. The Imperial Meccanian Academy is the visible embodiment of the highest manifestation of the Meccanian æsthetic spirit. All Meccanian artists are trained under the influence of the Academy. Its judgment, as expressed by the Central Board, is infallible. None of its decisions has ever been reversed. I do not think you realise how completely the influence of the Academy has moulded the Meccanian appreciation of Art during the last generation,” he went on in his slow, soft speech. “You have heard something from my friend Dr. Dodderer of the care taken by our all-beneficent Super-State in the cultivation of the appreciation of the Drama, and you have probably heard something too of our musical culture. Other forms of Art are equally sacred, since they are all Meccanian. Every person in the Fourth and higher classes goes through a course of art appreciation, which extends over several years. No person is admitted beyond the fifth stage of the Great Meccanian Gallery unless he has passed the advanced test. Attendance at the gallery is compulsory, once a fortnight, for all persons of the Fourth and Third Classes between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. The Fifth Class are not admitted to rooms beyond Stage III., except by special permission on four days in the year. For them we have a few local galleries, as we have for the Sixth Class also, containing pictures which are soundly Meccanian in spirit but which do not come up to the standard of the Great Gallery."

Presently we proceeded to the gallery containing the old historical collection. Musch said that we should see what we wanted of this in an hour, in fact it was rather a formality to visit it, but the Regulations for Foreign Observers made it necessary that I should see this first. It turned out to be really a fine collection, such as I had seen in many others parts of Europe; but I almost gasped at the strange freak which had inspired the curators in arranging the pictures. They were arranged strictly according to subject. All the "Nativities" were together in one room, all the "Madonnas" together in another, all the "Adam and Eves" together, all the "Deluges," all the "Susannas," all the "Prodigal Sons," all the "Venuses," all the "Bacchuses"; whatever the subject, every picture relating to that subject was placed together as if the gallery were a collection of butterflies.

Musch took no interest in this collection. It was all dead, he said, obsolete, pre-Meccanian, untouched by the spirit. When we came to the second gallery containing the older Meccanian pictures he showed more interest. Some painted three centuries ago I thought very fine, but Musch said they were lacking in self-consciousness. The Meccanian spirit was overlaid by false foreign culture. Only when we came to some weird and powerful but almost revolting pictures, dating from the beginning of the century, did he grow enthusiastic. These, he said, were the genuine precursors and pioneers of Meccanian Art.

It was afternoon when we entered the first section or stage of the Great Meccanian Gallery. This was the first stage for young persons, and was divided into a section containing 'elementary-general' pictures, and another containing historical pictures. The general pictures were mostly scenes of places of interest in various parts of Meccania, or national customs and public ceremonies. The technique was distinctly good. The historical pictures mostly represented wars against foreign enemies. I noticed that the Meccanians were represented as heroes, and their enemies as brutalised hordes of semi-lunatics. Others represented Meccanians discovering all the arts of peace and war. I spent a dreary day and more, working painfully through Stages I., II. and III., up to XIX., until, on the third day, we came to the most advanced specimens. These reminded me of Dr. Dodderer's account of the Meccanian drama. There was a number of allegorical subjects—" The Birth of the Meccanian Spirit," " The Victory of Time over Space," " The Festival of Chemistry," " The Nuptials of Science and Force," " The Conquests of Culture." Others were more mystical—"War the Servant of Culture," "The Deity instructing Monarchy," "The Eternal Principle of Meccanian Monarchy," "The Wisdom of the Super-State," "The Unity of the Seven Classes."

Some of these were immense canvases forty feet long, full of life-size figures drawn with microscopic exactness. The artists had certainly managed to catch and even accentuate the Meccanian features of every face. I felt the Meccanian atmosphere, but I still could not understand why such careful cultivation should have been required to produce this extraordinary collection. I would gladly have given the whole gallery for a few masterpieces from the old collection.

I could not imagine that any effect produced on the mind even of patriotic Meccanians could be worth all the trouble spent upon either the creation of the gallery itself or the organisation of artistic culture that centred round it. I was therefore curious to see what sort of effect the sight of the pictures had upon other visitors. In one of the lower rooms I had seen some groups of schoolgirls accompanied by a teacher. They all had their notebooks, and were taking down notes in shorthand. Musch explained enthusiastically that these girls would spend a whole afternoon on half a dozen pictures, and that by the time they were twenty years of age they would have studied every picture up to Stage XIX. in the gallery. What I overheard from the teacher's lecture was something like this: "Now let us analyse the colour scheme. By the aid of the colour divider you perceive at once the proportions in which the colours are distributed. Now notice that red, which occupies only 7 per cent of the canvas, is more conspicuous than green, which occupies more than 25 per cent." I did not catch the next passage, but presently I heard: "All the pictures by the same artist have the same distribution of colour. Consequently it would be possible to determine by an analysis of the colour scheme the authenticity of any picture by this artist. Next notice the method of the brush strokes. Under the microscope" (here the microscope came into play) "you will see the characteristic quality of the brush stroke. It has been already ascertained that in this picture there are 5232 down-strokes of an average length of 3 millimetres, 1079 strokes from right to left of an average length of 1½ millimetre, only 490 from left to right, and 72 upward strokes. The same proportion of strokes has been discovered in several other pictures by the same artist, according to the size of the picture. This picture was painted in exactly 125 hours. The quantity of paint used must have been almost exactly three-quarters of a litre, so you can make a calculation to ascertain the number of brush strokes to the litre."

In another gallery I noticed some superior young men of the Fourth Class in their green uniforms, discussing the merits of a popular artist. One of them was saying, " And I maintain that his morality is pre-Meccanian; he lacks super-masculinity." In another room a few stolid citizens of middle age were slowly making a pilgrimage. I wondered why they did not move faster and get it over, until I discovered there was a rule that, at each visit, non-students were not allowed to spend less than half an hour in one room, or more than three-quarters of an hour. This regulation did not apply to me so long as I was under the charge of Musch, who had access to the whole gallery.

I found Musch a less desirable acquaintance than Prigge. I suspected him of being addicted to drugs, and wondered how far his enthusiasm for the Meccanian spirit was an official pose; for, after completing my visit to the Great Gallery, I was asking him whether all artists were employed by the State, and whether there were not other types of pictures produced, besides those represented in the Great Gallery, when he began to tell me of another phase of art.

" All artists," he said, " who in the seventh year of their training are accepted by the Academy are employed permanently by the State; the others are found other employment according to their capacity, but are not permitted to produce pictures."

" I suppose," I said, " the artists who are taken into the service of the State are controlled in some way. What happens, for instance, if they turn out to be idlers ? "

" They are certainly controlled. The Board selects the subjects for the year, for each artist, according to his capacity. Of course he may suggest subjects too, but until they are approved he is not allowed to proceed. He must also submit a plan or sketch of his proposed treatment."

" And is a painter not allowed even in his own leisure to paint subjects of his own choice ? "

" Ah, there you touch upon an interesting subject," replied Musch, with something like a leer. " The Board are naturally desirous of preserving the Meccanian spirit in all its purity, but the effort to rise to the sublime heights of emotion which that demands, produces a reaction, and many of our artists find an outlet for this, so that beside the pure stream of Meccanian Art there flows, as it were, another stream."

" In other words," I suggested, " they carry on an illicit production of works of a lower ethical quality, which can only be disposed of by being sold to the rich."

" Your intuition is remarkable," he replied.

" Not in the least," I said. " One only requires a little knowledge of human nature to see what must happen. But how does this practice escape the attention of the Super-State ? " I said.

" There are many patrons of Art among the higher official class," replied Musch significantly.

This was the first time I had learnt from any person that the State had any chinks in its armour.

" Perhaps you can tell me," I said, " something which has puzzled me ever since I came here, and that is—Why your Super-State occupies itself so meticulously with such things as Music, and the Drama, and Art. Such interests seem rather foreign to the main purpose for which, as I understand it, the great statesmen who have made Meccania what it is, designed it."

" I have often wondered the same thing myself," replied Musch. " I can only say that if all this side of life were left unregulated, the life of the State would be incomplete. Sooner or later the consciousness of the State must embrace all things."

I said no more, and this was the last I saw of poor Musch, for next day he was ill, and I was taken by another Sub-Conductor, whose name was Grovel, to see the Mechow Memorial Museum. Almost everything in Mecco is a sort of memorial or reminder of Prince Mechow. Mechow Street, Mechow Square, the Mechow Monument, Mechow Park, the Mechow Palace, Mechow Hotels meet one at every turn. There are even Mechow whiskers, of a pattern seldom seen outside Meccania, but immensely popular among middle-aged officials of the Third and Fourth Classes. Curiously enough, I learnt that the higher officials rather resent the wearing of this style of whisker by subordinate officials, but as it is a sort of symbol of loyalty it is not considered proper to repress it.

The Museum is near the square and is the largest biographical museum in existence. It contains a model of the house Prince Mechow was born in, with all his clothes and toys, all the schoolbooks he used, and models of all the rooms he lived in, including his bedrooms. One room contains all the letters he wrote, all the letters written to him, all the minutes he wrote as a Civil servant, the very pens he used, the office furniture, etc. etc. The library contains not only the books he read, and the few he wrote, but an enormous number of books and pamphlets written about him personally and about all his work.

Besides his printed speeches, which run into many volumes, there are phonographic records of them, which are 'performed' daily in a special hall, to youths and girls from the High Schools.

One large room contains models of all the towns in Meccania, as they were before his reforms and as they are now. Another room is devoted to the great Monument. It contains the original plans and models, as well as a model of all the copies erected in various towns. Adjoining this room is a large collection of photographs of Prince Mechow, casts of his face and waxwork models of him as he appeared on several great historical occasions. One case in the library struck me as very characteristic. It was a series of volumes in folio, sumptuously bound. The first was entitled *Prince Mechow as Statesman*; and there were at least thirty others with such titles as Prince Mechow as Subject, Prince Mechow as Conservative, Prince Mechow as Reformer, Prince Mechow as Student, Prince Mechow as Author, Prince Mechow as Orator, Prince Mechow as Philosopher, Prince Mechow as Husband and Father, Prince Mechow as Agriculturist, Prince Mechow's Taste in Art, Prince Mechow's Taste in Music, Prince Mechow's Taste in Literature, Prince Mechow's Taste in Nature, Prince Mechow's Loyalty, Prince Mechow's Generosity, Prince Mechow's Pets, Prince Mechow's Religion.

CHAPTER VII

A MECCANIAN APOSTLE

IT was a week or two after my visit to the Mechow Museum that I made the acquaintance of one of the Foreign Observers who was staying at the hotel. A day or two before, I had been sent for by the Hotel Manager, and had been presented with a small certificate authorising me to take my meals in the common dining-room, and to converse with other foreigners whose names I was instructed to enter in my diary. I had previously noticed a certain gentleman from Luniland whose face seemed familiar to me. On this particular evening he came across to my table and introduced himself as Mr. Johnson, a friend of Mr. Yorke, in whose house I had stayed and where he had met me. We soon fell into conversation, and when dinner was over we retired for a long chat to a corner of the smoke-room. It appeared that he had been in Mecco over a year, and had travelled also in various parts of the country. In fact, this was his second visit, he said, his first having been made a few years before. He was a man of about forty-five, tall and slim, with a rather large bony nose and a grave but kindly expression. His manner was quiet and dignified, and at first he spoke with a certain obvious restraint ; but afterwards he became more genial and was rather humorous, after the manner of many of his countrymen.

" I should rather like to ask what you think of this country, but it would hardly be fair, because the chances are that every word we say here is overheard. I always suspect they have one of those beastly contrivances fixed in the walls, to enable the manager or somebody representing the Authorities to listen to everything that goes on. I don't much mind if they turn me out of their precious country, but I wouldn't like to get you into trouble. Anyhow, I believe if we were to begin talking in my language, which I remember you speak very well, we should presently have somebody round reminding us that it is against the rules."

" Yet you have spent quite a long time in the country apparently," I remarked. " I have really been wondering whether to stay here much longer, and perhaps you could give me some tips if I decide to stay."

" Well," he replied, " it's just a matter of taste whether you like the country. I shouldn't be able to stand it but for one thing."

" And what is that ? " I asked.

" It enables me to thank God every hour that I am not a Meccanian."

" Yes," I said, " there's something in that. I myself object to some of the inconveniences that these numerous regulations about everything entail, but they are nothing, I suppose, compared with what it would feel like if one expected to spend one's life here."

" It's just possible they really like it. But what sort of ' tips ' were you thinking of ? Perhaps I know the ropes a little better than you, if you have been here only a month or two."

" Well, there are two things I would like to know," I replied. " I am rather tired of being ' conducted ' about everywhere. That's the first. And I want to get to know individual people as I did in Luniland. Here, so far, I have met only officials, always on duty. It seems impossible to get into contact with real live people. Until lately, as you know, I was forbidden to talk to the people staying in the hotel; but now that I have got over that difficulty, although, no doubt, I can pick up a certain amount of information from my fellow Foreign Observers and enjoy their conversation, I am no nearer getting to know the Meccanian private citizens themselves."

" And do you particularly want to know them ? " asked Mr. Johnson.

" One naturally wants to know what the people of any country are like, and unless one has some fairly intimate intercourse of a social kind with people of different ranks and types, one might almost as well stay at home and read the matter up in books," I replied.

"I see. You are a genuine Foreign Observer. Well, to tell the truth, so am I," he said more confidentially. "I am not here because I like it. I detest the whole lot of them. I came here for the first time five or six years ago. I had heard a lot about the country and its wonderful organisation. Organisation! Blessed word! I had also heard some rather tall stories, and thought the accounts had been exaggerated. I came with an open mind. I rather prided myself on being an impartial observer. I was prepared to allow a lot for the natural differences of taste between one nation and another. At first I was so keenly interested that I didn't mind the little restrictions, but when the novelty had worn off, and I began to realise what it all meant, I determined to make a more thorough study of the country than I had at first thought would be worth while. So I am here now studying Meccanian education. Now the only way, so far as I know, of getting rid of your everlasting 'conductors' is to get permission to study some special subject. I went through just the same experience. I was what they call merely a 'general' observer. The Authorities don't exactly like the 'general' observer. They can't find it in their hearts to let him alone. As they regulate their own people they must keep as close a watch on the foreigner. As he doesn't fit into their system, they have to invent a system for him. It is troublesome to them, and not very pleasant for the foreigner; but Meccanian principles make it necessary. However, if you can satisfy them that you are a *bona fide* student of some special subject—it doesn't matter what it is, you may choose anything from the parasites in the intestines of a beetle to the philosophy of the Absolute—they will treat you quite decently, according to their lights."

"How do you account for this difference?" I asked.

"They are immensely flattered by the notion that if you come here to study anything, it must be because their knowledge is so superior to what can be found elsewhere. However, if you want to get rid of the daily worry of a 'conductor,' that is what you must do. But you must be a specialist of some sort, or they won't admit you to the privilege."

"But there is no special subject I want to study," I said. "I am just a 'general' observer, and if I undertake to study a special subject I shall miss seeing what I most want to see."

"That is a difficulty. Perhaps you had better go on as you have been doing, and when you have had enough of that, go in for some political institutions; they have got you registered as a National Councillor, so you can pretend to study the working of the Constitution or some such thing."

"That's rather a good idea," I said; "but, judging from what I have seen, I should doubt whether they will let me see what I want to see."

"Why, what do you want to see?"

"Just what I cannot get from an inspection of the machinery of the State—the effect of the laws and customs on the actual life of the people."

"Ah, that you will have to get by the aid of your imagination."

"But," I suggested, "is it not possible to get permission to live in some family, or with several different families in different classes in succession?"

"Oh yes," replied Johnson, "quite possible, if you are prepared to go through all the necessary formalities; but I doubt whether you will get much by it. You see, each family is a sort of replica, in miniature, of the State. They will have to report to the Police once a week upon all your doings. Every word you say will be listened to. They will be studying you, just as you will be studying them. I have tried it. There *is* no natural intercourse in this country. Try it if you like, but I am sure you will come to my opinion in the end.

"Don't forget to enter the time of this conversation in your diary," Mr. Johnson said as we parted. "If you make a mistake, or if I make a mistake, we shall have an interview with an inspector from the Time Department, and the hotel manager will worry us to death about it."

The next day I resumed my tour of observation with a new ‘ conductor ’ whose name was Lickrod. He was almost affectionate in his greeting when we met at the Police Office, and we had not been long together before I recognised that he was a different type from Prigge, or Sheep, or any of the others I had met. He was to take me to see the Industrial town, and he was full of enthusiasm for everything we were to see. As we went along in the tram he explained rather effusively that it was a great pleasure to him to meet foreigners. He had a mission in life, just as Meccania had a mission among all the nations. He was a loyal Meccanian —in fact, he yielded to no man in his loyalty to the State; but for that very reason he ventured to criticise one defect in the policy of the Government. I began to wonder what that could be.

“ I have travelled abroad,” he said, “ and I have seen with my own eyes the benighted condition of so many millions of my fellow-creatures. I come home, and I see everywhere around me order, knowledge, prosperity, cleanliness—no dirt, no poverty, no disorder, no strikes, no disturbance, no ignorance, no disease that can be prevented—Culture everywhere. It makes me almost weep to think of the state of the world outside. We have not done all that we might have done to carry our Culture abroad. We have kept it too much to ourselves. In my humble way, as a Conductor of Foreigners, I take every opportunity I can of spreading a knowledge of our Culture. But instead of a few score, or at most a few hundred, foreigners every year, we ought to have thousands here. Then they would become missionaries in their own countries. I always impress upon them that they must begin with the reform of education in their countries; and I would advise you, before you return, to make a thorough study of our system of education. Without that you cannot hope to succeed."

"But," I suggested, "if other countries followed your example would they not become as strong as you? Perhaps your Government looks at it from that point of view."

"There are, on this question," he observed sagely, "two opposite opinions. One is that it is better to keep our Culture to ourselves; the other is that we ought to teach other nations, so that ultimately all the earth can become one great and glorious Meccania."

By this time we had arrived at the entrance to the Industrial town. Conductor Lickrod broke off to note the time of our arrival, and to lead me into the office of the Governor or Controller of what, for convenience, I may call Worktown. Indeed the Industrial quarter is known by a similar term in Mecco. This Controller is responsible for the preservation of order; but as there is no difficulty about discipline in the ordinary sense of the word, his functions are rather to promote a high standard of Meccanian conduct among the workers of all ages and grades. In this work he is assisted by scores of Sub-Controllers of Industrial Training, as they are called.

The organisation of the Controller's Department was explained before we proceeded to any of the works. There was a large room filled with thousands of little dossiers in shelves, and card-index cases to correspond. The particulars of the character and career of every worker in the town could be ascertained at a moment's notice. All the workers were either in the Fifth or Sixth Class, but they were divided into more than a dozen subgrades, and the card-index showed by the colour which of the many grades any particular person had attained.

I asked how the workmen were engaged.

"The industrial career of a workman," said Lickrod enthusiastically, "begins, if I may so express myself, with the dawn of his industrial intelligence. In our schools—and here you perceive one of the perfections of our educational system—our teachers are trained to detect the signs of the innate capacity of each child, and to classify it appropriately. In 79½ per cent of cases, as you will see from the last report of the Industrial Training Section of the Department of Industry and Commerce, the careers of boys are determined before the age of thirteen. The rest is merely a question of training. By a proper classification we are able to adjust the supply of each different kind of capacity to the requirements of our industry.

We avoid all the waste and uncertainty which one sees in countries where even the least competent workmen are allowed to choose their employment. We guarantee employment to everybody, and on the other hand we preserve the right to say what the employment shall be."

"Does that mean," I asked, "that a workman can never change his employment?"

"In some of the more backward parts of the country it is sometimes necessary for workmen to change their employment; but here, in Mecco, we should think we had managed our business very badly if that were necessary."

"But without its being necessary, a man might wish to change. I have heard of many cases, in Luniland and Transatlantica, of a clever and enterprising man having risen to eminence, after an experience in half a dozen different occupations. Here, I understand, that is impossible."

"Ah," replied Lickrod, "I see you have not grasped the scientific basis of our system. You say such and such a person rose to eminence, shall we say as a lawyer, after having been, let us say, a printer or even a house-painter. If there had been a sufficient supply of good lawyers it is probable that he would not have succeeded in becoming an eminent lawyer. Now, *we* know our requirements as regards lawyers, just as we know our requirements as to engineers. We have also the means of judging the capacity of our young people, and we place them in the sphere in which they can be of most service."

I thought I could see holes in this theory, but all I said was, " So you think of the problem from the point of view of the good of the State, regardless of the wishes of the individual."

" Certainly of the good of the State ; but you mistake the true meaning of the wishes of the individual. The apparent wish of the individual may be to follow some other course than that which the State, with its fuller knowledge and deeper wisdom, directs ; but the real inward wish of all Meccanians is to serve the interests of Meccania. That is the outcome of our system of education. We must talk about that some other time, but just now I want you to see that our system produces such wonderful fruits that it never enters the head of any Meccanian workman to question its wisdom."

We entered a gigantic engineering works, full of thousands of machine tools. Everything appeared as clean and orderly as in the experimental room of an engineering college. Some of the workmen wore grey-coloured overalls, showing that they belonged to the Sixth Class, but most of them wore the chocolate uniform of the men of the Fifth Class. These were evidently performing highly skilled work. Even the moulding shops were clean and tidy, and the employment of machinery for doing work that elsewhere I had been accustomed to see done by hand astonished me. The workmen looked like soldiers and behaved like automatons. Conversation went on, but I was informed by Lickrod, again in a tone of pride, that only conversation relative to the work in hand was permitted. Here and there I saw a man in a green uniform, applying some mysterious instrument to one of the workmen. I asked Lickrod what this meant.

"That is one of our industrial psychologists, testing the psycho-physiological effects of certain operations. By this means we can tell not only when a workman is over-fatigued, but also if he is under-fatigued. It is all part of our science of production."

"What happens if a man is under-fatigued persistently?" I asked.

"He will have to perform fatigue duty after the usual hours, just as he would in the army," he answered.

"And do they not object to this?"

"Who?"

"The workmen."

"Why should they? The man who is guilty of under-fatigue knows that he is justly punished. The others regard the offence as one against themselves. It is part of our industrial training. But we have indeed very few cases of under-fatigue in Mecco. You know, perhaps, that all our citizens are, so to speak, selected. Anyone who does not appreciate his privileges can be removed to other cities or towns, and there are thousands of loyal

Meccanians only too eager to come to live in Mecco."

One of the most remarkable industries I saw carried on was the House-building Industry. The plans for houses of every kind, except those for the Third and higher classes, are stereotyped. That is to say, there are some forty or fifty different plans, all worked out to the minutest detail. Suppose ten houses are wanted in any particular quarter, the Building Department decides the type of house, the order is given for ten houses, Type No. 27 let us say. This goes to the firm which specialises in Type No. 27. There are no architect's fees, and the expenses of superintending the work are almost *nil.*

I asked Conductor Lickrod why it was that, when the whole industry of house-building had been reduced to a matter of routine, the State did not itself carry on the work, but employed private firms.

"That question," he said, "touches one of the fundamental principles of our Meccanian policy. If you study our National Economy you will learn all you require about it, but for the moment I may say that the control of the State over Industry is complete, yet we have not extinguished the capitalist. We do not desire to do so, for many reasons. The Third Class, which includes all the large capitalists, and the Fourth Class, which includes the smaller capitalists, furnish a most important element in the National Economy. Their enterprise in business and manufacture is truly astonishing."

" But what motive have they for displaying enterprise ? " I asked.

" What motive ? Why, every motive. Their livelihood depends upon the profits made ; their promotion to a higher grade in their own class, and in the case of those in the Fourth Class their promotion to the ranks of the Third Class, also depends upon their skill and enterprise. But most of all, the Meccanian spirit, which has been inculcated by our system of education, inspires them with the desire to excel the business men of all other nations for the sake of Meccanian Culture."

Certainly the organisation of industry was marvellous, and the production of everything must be enormous. We spent three days going through factory after factory. There was the same marvellous order and cleanliness and perfect discipline, wherever one turned. On leaving the works the men all marched in step, as if on parade. Inside, they saluted their ' officers,' but the salute was of a special kind—the hand was raised to the shoulder only, so as to avoid a sweeping motion which might have brought it in contact with some object. One of the triumphs of organisation, to which Lickrod called my attention, was the arrangement whereby the workmen reached their work at the proper time, got their midday meal, and reached home in the evening without any congestion. Each separate workshop had its appointed time for beginning work ; some began as early as 6, others at 6.15, the last to begin were a few that had a comparatively short day, starting at 7.30. The midday meal began at 11.30, and was taken by relays until about 1.30. All the women employed in the canteens were the wives and daughters of workmen, who spent the rest of their time in household work at home.

At the end of the third day, as I was taking coffee with Conductor Lickrod, I took advantage of his communicativeness, which was rather a contrast to the brusqueness of Prigge, to get some light on several matters that had so far puzzled me.

" Your industrial system," I remarked, " as a productive machine, appears to me to be quite marvellous."

Lickrod beamed. " I knew you would think so," he said. " We have a word in our language which, so far as I am aware, has no exact equivalent in other languages, because their culture does not include the thing. It means ' the adaptation of the means to the end.' Our industrial system exemplifies the virtue connoted by that expression ; but our whole industrial system itself is only a means perfectly adapted to its end. We have no ' Industrial Problem ' in the old sense of that word. Of course we are always effecting improvements in detail."

" But I have been wondering how it is," I said, " that with all this marvellous efficiency in production, your workmen in the Fifth and Sixth, and

I suppose in the Seventh Class also, appear to work as long as those in other countries; they do not appear to be richer and they seem to have fewer opportunities of rising in the social scale."

"I have heard the same question put by other Foreign Observers," replied Lickrod, "and I am glad you have come to me for information on the subject. A complete answer involves a correct understanding of our whole Culture. To begin with, the supreme good of the State can only be determined by the State itself. The wishes or opinions of the private individual are of no account. Now, the State knows what its requirements are, and determines the amounts and kinds of work necessary to meet these requirements. By means of our Sociological Department, our Industrial Department, our Time Department, and the various sections of our Department of Culture, we know perfectly how to adjust our industries to the end determined by the State. Every class and grade therefore is required to contribute towards the supreme good of the State according to its ability."

"I quite understand," I interrupted, "the point of view you are expounding; but what I am wondering is why, with all this efficient machinery of production, everybody in the country is not in the enjoyment either of wealth or of leisure."

"I am afraid it is not easy for a foreigner, without longer experience, to appreciate the different value we attach to things such as wealth and leisure, and other things too. Suppose, purely for the sake of argument, that our working class worked only five hours a day instead of nine or ten: what would they do with their leisure?"

"I suppose they would enjoy themselves," I replied; "and seeing that they have had the benefit of a good education, I take it that they would know how to enjoy themselves in a decent manner. Besides, your regulations would be able to prevent any excesses or disorders."

"And you think they would be better employed in enjoying themselves than in serving the State as they do now?" asked Lickrod.

"Who is to judge whether they would be better employed?" I answered.

"That is just the question," said Lickrod, "and it is there that our Culture is so much in advance of other nations. Private enjoyment is not the supreme end of the State."

"But surely," I said, "you do not go on producing wealth simply for the sake of keeping your working classes employed ten hours instead of five? What becomes of the wealth?"

"As I said before, we produce just the wealth we require."

"Then I confess I am baffled," I said. "Possibly a great deal is required for your army and navy and other public services. You have, you must acknowledge, a very large number of people employed as officials of all kinds. As these are not producing material goods, perhaps the surplus wealth is drained away into these channels?"

"All that is included in my statement, that we produce what we require," answered Lickrod.

"Can you give me any idea," I asked, with some hesitation, fearing I was getting on delicate ground, "how much of the industrial product is required for military and naval purposes? I don't suppose you can, because I am aware that your Government does not publish its military estimates; and even if it did, it would not be possible to tell how much of the labour of the working classes is absorbed in that way. But whilst I do not ask for any information that it is not usual to give, I suggest to you that when I see the extraordinary productivity of your economic machine, coupled with the comparative simplicity of the mode of life pursued by the bulk of your population, I am bound to infer one of two things: either a vast amount must be absorbed by some rich class, or it must be in some way absorbed by the State itself."

"I think your reasoning is perfectly sound," replied Lickrod. "I could not tell you what proportion of the wealth product is absorbed by the army if I wished; for I do not know, and nobody in Meccania knows, except the Supreme Authority. The Finance Department knows only in terms of money what is spent upon the various services. But without knowing either exact amounts or proportions, I have no hesitation in saying that a very great deal of the wealth product does go in these directions. But that is part of our Meccanian ideal. The army is the nation, is it not? Every workman you have seen is a soldier; and he is a soldier just as much when he is in the factory as when he is in the camp or the barracks. He spends five years of his life between twenty and thirty in the camp, and he spends from one to two months of every year afterwards in keeping up his training. Then of course there is the equipment of both army and navy, which of course is always developing. Your idea is, I suppose, that if we devoted less to such objects as these, the people of the working classes, or even the whole body of people, would have more to spend upon pleasure, or could enjoy more leisure."

"Yes," I said, "in most other countries every penny spent upon either military purposes or upon State officials, beyond what is strictly necessary, is grudged. The people scrutinise very keenly all public expenditure. They prefer to spend what they regard as their own money in their own way. It seems to me therefore, that either your people do not look at the matter in the same way, or if they do, that the State has discovered a very effective way of overcoming their objections."

"What you say," replied Lickrod, "only brings out more and more the difference between our Culture and that of other nations. This sense of antagonism between the interests of the individual and the interests of the State, which has hindered and apparently still hinders the development of other countries, has been almost entirely eradicated among the Meccanians."

"What!" I said, "do you mean that a Meccanian pays his taxes cheerfully?"

"What taxes?" asked Lickrod blandly.

"I do not know in what form your taxes are paid," I said, "but they must be paid in some way, and I suspect that even in Meccania, if they were left to voluntary subscription, the Exchequer would not be quite so full."

"Now that is a very curious instance of what I am tempted to call the political stupidity of other nations. Instead of removing all circumstances that provoke a consciousness of difference between the individual and the State, they seem to call the attention of the private citizen, as they call him, to these differences. They first allow a man to regard property as entirely his own, and then discuss with him how much he shall contribute, and finally make him pay in hard cash."

"And how do you manage to get over the difficulty?" I said.

"All Meccanians are taught from their youth—even from early childhood—that all they have they owe to the beneficent protection of the State. The State is their Father and their Mother. No one questions its benevolence or its wisdom or its power.

Consequently all this haggling about how much shall be paid this year or that year is avoided. The State is the direct paymaster of nearly half the nation. Hence it can deduct what is due without any sense of loss. Through our Banking system the collection of the rest is quite easy. The private employers deduct from the wages of their employees, and are charged the exact amount through the Banks. No one feels it."

"But does your Parliament exercise no control over taxation ?" I asked in some surprise.

"Our Parliament is in such complete accord with the Government that it would not dream of disturbing the system of taxation, which has worked so well for over thirty years," replied Lickrod.

"Have they the power to do so ?" I asked.

"They have the power to ask questions, certainly," he replied; "but the taxes are fixed for periods of seven years. That is to say, the direct taxes falling upon each separate class are fixed every seven years in each case ; so that the taxes for the First Class come up for revision one year, those for the Second Class the next year, and so on. The Constitution does not allow Parliament to increase the amount asked for by the Government, and as the vote is taken not individually but by classes, it is hardly to the interest of any of the classes to try to reduce the amount assessed upon any one class. Besides, the Government derives a considerable proportion of its income from its own property in the shape of mines, railways, forests, farms, and so forth. When we hear foreigners speak of Parliamentary Opposition we hardly know what the term means. It is entirely foreign to the Meccanian spirit."

"You speak of the Government," I remarked, "but I have not yet discovered what the Government is."

"I am afraid I must refer you to our manuals of Constitutional Law," replied Lickrod.

"Oh, I know in a general way the outline of your Constitution," I said, "but in every country there is a real working Constitution, which differs from the formal Constitution. For instance, Constitutions usually contain nothing about political parties, yet the policy and traditions of these parties are the most important factors. The merely legal powers of a monarch, for instance, may in practice lapse, or may be so rarely exercised as not to matter. Now in Meccania one sees a powerful Government at work everywhere—that is, one sees the machinery of Government, but the driving force and the controlling force seem hidden."

"You may find the answer to your question if you make a study of our political institutions. At present I am afraid your curiosity seems directed towards matters that to us have only a sort of historical interest. It would never occur to any Meccanian to ask who controls the Government.

His conception of the State is so entirely different that the question seems almost unmeaning."

"I have recently spent a long time in Luniland," I remarked at this point, "and I am afraid a Lunilander would say that if such a question has become unmeaning to a Meccanian the Meccanians must have lost the political sense."

"And we should say that we have solved the problem of politics. We should say," he went on, "that the Lunilanders have no Government. A Government that can be changed every few years, a Government that has to ask the consent of what they call the taxpayers for every penny it is to spend, a Government that must expose all its business to an ignorant mob, a Government that must pass and carry out any law demanded by a mere majority—we do not call that a Government."

"They regard liberty as more important than Government," I replied, with a smile.

"They are still enslaved by the superstitions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," he replied solemnly. "No nation will make real progress until it learns how to embody its physical, intellectual and spiritual forces in an all-embracing State. Our State may be imperfect—I know it is—but we are in the right way; and developed as it may be in another century it will completely answer all human requirements."

"Developed?" I said, almost betraying my amusement, for I wondered what further developments the Super-State was capable of. " In what directions do you anticipate development ? "

" There is still an immense fund of religious sentiment that is squandered upon unworthy objects: this may be—I feel sure it will be—directed into a nobler channel. Our ritual, too, in no way corresponds to the sublimity of the Idea of the Super-State. The ritual of the Catholic Church—which is after all but a section of the whole State—is still superior, from the sensuous and the artistic point of view, to our State ritual. Our reverence for the State is too cold, too inarticulate. I have sometimes thought that the Emperor might found an order of priests or monks who would cultivate an inward devotion that would inevitably give birth to a real religion of the State."

" You are a true missionary," I said; " in fact, I think you are entitled to be considered a Meccanian Apostle. I have learnt a great deal from our intercourse, and just as you have suggested that the Government might bring more foreigners to see the wonders of your Meccanian Culture, I would suggest that they should send you and others like yourself into other countries to enlighten them as to the real mission of Meccania."

He was pleased to accept this testimony from an innocent and well-disposed Foreign Observer, and said that I could best show my appreciation by inducing more of my fellow-countrymen to come and study the wonders of Meccanian Culture.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MECHOW FESTIVAL

I TOLD Mr. Johnson of this conversation when next we met, and he seemed immensely amused by it. "You will have a chance of seeing a bit of Meccanian ritual to-morrow," he said.

"You mean this Prince Mechow Festival," I replied. "What is it like? I suppose you have seen it before?"

"Haven't you noticed the whole town is crowded with visitors?" he said. "But I won't take the edge off by telling you anything about it. You shall see it for yourself without prejudice."

I was aroused about five o'clock next morning by a tremendous booming of guns. It lasted for half an hour, and sounded like a bombardment. Then, for the next half-hour, all the bells in Mecco began ringing. By this time I was dressed and out on the veranda of the hotel. I had tried to go outside the hotel, but was reminded by the porter that we were instructed to remain indoors until we were taken to a building in the great square to watch the proceedings. At a few minutes after six we were conveyed in a motor-car to one of the hotels in the square, and provided with seats at the windows. There were only about twenty Foreign Observers in Mecco altogether, and as most of them were not very desirable acquaintances I sought the company of Mr. Johnson.

The streets were rapidly filling with people, the great majority being dressed in grey and chocolate uniforms, with a fair sprinkling of green. There were also quite a number of dark blue uniforms. As there is no Seventh Class in Mecco, I pointed this out to Johnson, who said that all the people in the streets were from the provinces.

"You will see the citizens of Mecco presently," he said.

"Where have they lodged all these people?" I asked, for I knew the hotels would not hold them.

"Oh, every person is billeted upon somebody of his own class as far as possible. Some of them have relatives here."

At seven o'clock, about fifty bands of music struck up, in different parts of the great central circle. They all played the same tunes and kept wonderful time. As soon as they struck up, Johnson said, "That means the processions have started."

We waited about a quarter of an hour. The square itself was quite clear of people, but a few sentries in brilliant uniforms stood guarding the entrances from the four streets that led into it. The great statue towered above everything. Presently, headed by a band, the first of the processions, composed of members of the Sixth Class, in their best grey uniforms with all their badges and stripes, reached the square. Six men, at the head, carried a great banner, and were followed by another six, carrying an enormous wreath, which they deposited at the foot of the statue. Then, as the procession moved on across the square, six abreast, the two outside files left the procession, and separating, one to the right the other to the left, filled up the back of the whole square four deep. How many men there were altogether of the Sixth Class I have no idea, but they took half an hour to file past. Then followed another still bigger procession of the Fifth Class. These performed a similar ceremony, and proceeded to fill up the square ten deep. After them came the Fourth Class, in their green uniforms. This procession was much more brilliant in appearance than even the Fifth Class in its bright chocolate uniform. There were apparently ten grades of the Fourth Class, including as it does nearly all the professional men, as well as officials and business men. Some of the men in the first two grades had their breasts almost covered with badges and decorations. Last came a much smaller procession of the Third Class. The yellow against the background of green and chocolate and grey, as they filed into the square, filling the inner part about four deep, made a brilliant colour effect. There were no women in the processions, but the buildings in the square were full of the wives and daughters of the men of the upper classes, who watched the proceedings from the open windows and balconies. The bands went on playing all the time the processions were moving in and filling up the square. It must have been half-past nine when the music suddenly stopped. There was silence for five minutes. Then suddenly the guns burst forth again, and for a quarter of an hour the noise was deafening. Then the bells rang for half an hour, but after the guns they sounded like a mere tinkling. At half-past ten, after a short silence, a subdued kind of murmur went through the crowd, and we saw advancing from the Imperial Church, which stands back from one side of the square, a new procession, this time in military uniforms. They seemed to be arranged in companies of about fifty, and there must have been a hundred companies. They were all on foot, as it would have been very inconvenient to have cavalry in the crowded square. They filled up the central space. Immediately after came a group of about fifty generals, all belonging to the Army Council. They were followed by the members of the Imperial Council, all dressed in Generals' uniforms. Then came the Emperor himself, followed by the Prime Minister and some of the chief officials of the State. I could not see the face of the Emperor from where I stood. He was dressed in the most gorgeous sort of uniform I have ever seen, and as he appeared, at a given signal (which I did *not* see), a great shout went up from all the people present, "Hail the Emperor! Hail the Emperor! Hail the Emperor!" Then everybody knelt on one knee for about half a minute, whilst he uttered some kind of blessing which I could not hear. The bands then struck up the National Hymn, after which there was complete silence for a minute or two. Suddenly a loud voice was heard. It must have been produced by a kind of megaphone, but it was perfectly clear. We were listening to the Emperor's formal speech on the occasion. I have not the exact words, but as near as I can reproduce it the speech was something like this:

"We meet for the sixteenth time since the death of the illustrious Prince Mechow, to commemorate his never-to-be-forgotten services and to thank God for the blessings which, through the divinely appointed instrumentality of that noble Statesman, he has so abundantly bestowed upon this his most beloved country. . . .

"Superior to all other nations and races in our God-given endowments, we had not achieved those triumphs of culture of which our noble race and nation was capable, until by God's grace my father's Minister, Prince Mechow, showed my people of all ranks and classes how to direct their efforts, through discipline and knowledge and devotion, to the strengthening and glorifying of our divinely founded State. . . .

"To-day we again show our gratitude to God for having raised up, in the direct succession of great servants of the State, one who knew how to serve his Emperor and his God, and thus to defeat the evil intentions of all the host of envious and malignant enemies—enemies to God as well as to our nation—by whom we are surrounded. . . .

"Let those enemies beware how they set God at defiance by thwarting the divine mission he has entrusted to us. He has set our glorious and invincible State in the midst of all the nations, but in their blindness and ignorance they have scorned our mission. . . . If, whilst all other nations are striving within themselves, class against class and man against man and rulers against ruled, in our nation and among my people there is but one will, one purpose, one mind, we owe it, under God, more to Prince Mechow than to any other. . . . This monument, which to-day we decorate with the wreaths of memory, is but a symbol of that monument which exists in the shape of the whole nation, whose forces he organised and whose purposes he directed to one end, the strength and unity of the State. Hail to Prince Mechow! Hail! Hail! Hail!"

The whole crowd burst out in shouts of "Hail to Prince Mechow! Hail!" Then came renewed shouts of "Hail the Emperor! Hail!" After he had bowed a dozen times or so, those near him prepared to form the procession back towards the

Imperial Church, and for the next two hours the processions filed out to the sound of music. It grew very tiresome, and I was getting hungry, so we got permission to return to our hotel for a meal. Until now everybody had fasted, but the rest of the day was given up to a sort of carnival. Banquets were arranged to take place in every part of the city, and the whole population prepared to enjoy itself. At these banquets it is the custom to make patriotic speeches, which are faithfully reported. The man who is adjudged to have made the best patriotic speech is awarded a special decoration called the Prince Mechow Prize.

As the streets were liable to be crowded with strangers, it was not thought fit to allow us to wander about; but I learnt from Johnson that as the day goes on, and a large quantity of beer is drunk, the streets become filled with a boisterous crowd, which is a most unusual sight in Mecco.

Two things seemed to me rather odd about this festival: why was it that the Emperor allowed such adulation to be paid to a former subject; and why was the commemoration of Prince Mechow, who had done so much to introduce the strictest discipline, the one occasion when licence was allowed? I put these questions to Mr. Johnson as we sat talking in the smoke-room, where we could faintly hear the murmur of the crowd in the streets in the distance.

" It is just as well you did not ask these questions of any of your Meccanian conductors," replied Johnson. " The real reason is one which I don't believe any Meccanian would avow. This Mechow Festival is a genuine expression of national character. They used to ' enthuse ' about Bludiron in almost the same way, some eighty years ago. I have heard my father tell of some of the scenes he saw here. They have a childish belief in national heroes. Then, the upper classes have a very special reason for encouraging this cult of Mechowism. They realise how completely he did their work for them and made their power secure, and it suits them to cultivate the superstition that there is something sacred about everything he established. Perhaps you know that the Military Class are the real power behind the Throne here. They let the Emperor play his part on the stage in public, but he takes good care not to do anything to offend them; and this worship of Mechow is a sort of symbol of their power. The real effect of Mechow's reforms was not to make the Emperor himself supreme, but to make the Military Caste all-powerful. They take care, therefore, to make this festival popular. I don't suppose the Emperor altogether enjoys the part he has to play on an occasion like to-day."

" What you say about the Military is rather interesting," I replied, " for only a day or two ago I was trying to get Lickrod to tell me what the Government really is. I couldn't make out whether he knew or not, but he certainly didn't enlighten me much."

"Of course it's the Military Class," said Johnson, with a laugh. "I thought everybody knew that. It's a very open secret."

"I have heard that theory put forward," I said, "but I can't quite make it square with the facts."

"Why not?" asked Johnson.

"Well, if the Military are the supreme power, why should they have such an elaborate Bureaucracy and make such a parade of culture in every direction?" I said.

"Ah," replied Johnson, "you must remember we are living in the twentieth century; in fact, you must remember all that this wonderful rascal of a Mechow taught his countrymen. The clumsy methods of the Military Autocracy of a barbarous age would not be of the slightest use in our times. Human society in modern times, even under an Autocracy, is tremendously complex. An elaborate Bureaucracy is a necessary part of the machine. Suppose, for instance, that you were an autocrat, and you wanted to be able to wield the whole force of the nation over which you ruled, how could you give effect to your will unless the whole nation were organised with that end in view? Suppose you had absolute power, as far as the law could give it you, and suppose you wanted a powerful army; you would want also the best equipment. How would you get it unless your industries were already organised and under control? There is no doubt at all that the nation that can control and mobilise all its resources for whatever purposes it happens to require them, has a great advantage, from the military standpoint, over other nations not so organised."

"But," I said, "they organise all sorts of things that have nothing to do with military efficiency. Look at the theatres, and at Art, and Music: their organisation of these is carried to an absurd point."

"That is quite true, but did you ever know any big organisation that did just exactly what it ought to do, and stopped short of the things it ought not to do? Once set up a Bureaucracy and it will inevitably extend its functions. People are dirty, so the bureaucrat says, let us make them wash. Then, he says, let us make them keep their houses clean. Then, he says, let us make them keep their clothes tidy. He doesn't like the way they walk, so he makes them march in step. You can see that there was a tremendous advantage in having a well-instructed middle class and a well-instructed working class. To secure this, a powerful department to organise and enforce education was necessary. Once the Bureaucracy was created there was hardly any limit to its functions. Besides, and this seems to me rather important, the more widely extended are the functions of the Bureaucracy, the more effectually is its main purpose disguised. The people are accustomed to being directed and 'organised.' They imagine, in a vague sort of way, that it is all for their good. Another little turn of the screw is not felt. If the State tells me what to eat, why shouldn't it tell me what to wear, and what to read, and what to think?

"There is another reason why it 'organises' all this culture. In every nation some kind of intellectual life goes on. It must be either free or controlled. If it is let alone, the force of ideas is such that, in the long run, they will shape the political structure. The State, if it means to preserve itself as an Autocracy, must get control over the intellectual life of the nation. In ancient times it succeeded for a time. In the Middle Ages the Church tried the same thing. In modern times most States have *not* made the attempt, but this State *has* made the attempt. It has done no more than Plato would have done. It has done it rather differently perhaps, but it has followed the same idea."

"They would feel rather flattered, don't you think," I said, "if you told them they were carrying out Plato's principles?"

"Perhaps they would, but that only means they have learnt nothing from twenty centuries of political experience."

"On the contrary, it looks as if they have learnt a good deal," I said.

"They have learnt how to make a nation of slaves and tyrants."

"And yet they don't seem to mind being slaves, if they are slaves."

"I wonder," replied Johnson. "A hundred years in the life of a nation is not a long time. Human nature is a strange thing. They kiss the rod so affectionately that I don't mind how long *they* remain in bondage: all I care about is that they should not make slaves of the rest of us."

"Do you think there is any danger?" I asked.

"I do indeed," replied Johnson. "A great danger."

"Why, how could it be brought about?" I said.

"In all sorts of ways. Liberty is the most precarious possession of the human race. Very few nations have possessed it for long together."

"But surely," I said, "Meccania is so unpopular, to put it mildly, with almost all other nations, that her influence can hardly be dangerous."

"Oh, but it is," insisted Johnson. "The danger takes several forms. Meccania is tremendously strong as a military power. She knows it, and other nations know it. Suppose a great war took place, and she were successful; she would bring other nations under her power, as she has done in the past. These would soon be compelled to adopt her institutions. Then, in self-defence, other nations would feel themselves compelled to resort to the same means as have proved successful in her case, to make themselves strong too. To a certain degree that has already taken place. Lots of our military people now are always agitating to introduce what they call reforms, to place us on a level with Meccania. Then all sorts of cranks come over here: Sanitary Reformers, Eugenists, Town Planners, Educationists, Physical Culturists, Temperance Reformers, Scientific Industrialists, and so forth. Each of them finds some idea he wants to push. There are people who think that if they could only cure unemployment they would bring in the millennium, and they are willing to reconstruct society for the sole purpose of doing away with unemployment. And so we get disconnected bits of Bureaucracy set up, first for this and then for that. By and by some one will come along who will try to co-ordinate the whole thing."

I had evidently set Mr. Johnson on to a train of thought that excited him, for he usually took things very calmly. After a short pause he went on: "And yet I don't think the greatest danger comes from these would-be bureaucrats of ours. With us the bureaucrat only gets his chance when we have played the fool so badly that somebody has got to step in and set things right. For instance, we had what we called magistrates at one time. They were supposed to be the prominent citizens with common sense and initiative; but they became so incompetent, and the authorities chose them so foolishly, that they lost the public confidence; so we had to replace them partly by officials and partly by paid judges. Then look at our manufacturers; they hadn't the sense to apply a reasonable proportion of their profits to developing their business on scientific lines, so the State had to step in and compel them to. They hadn't the sense, either, to encourage their workpeople to become educated, nor even to pay them any more than they could help. Consequently the State had to step in again. No, what I am most afraid of is our disinclination to set things right ourselves. We can't let mothers go on murdering their babies, we can't let food dealers poison the public, we can't let seducers of children traffic in obscenity; and as the public is apathetic about all these things the bureaucrat steps in and adds another Department to the fabric. What I am afraid of chiefly is that we shall get into a bad mess that will place us at the mercy either of the Meccanians over here or of our own Meccanians at home."

CHAPTER IX

MECCANISATION

WHEN I came to reflect that night upon the experience of the last few days, I was much impressed by three things which somehow seemed to hang together. There was first my conversation with Lickrod. If all Meccanians, or even a majority, took the same view of the State that he did, there could be no limit to the functions of the State. He seemed to claim for it all the moral authority of the Mediæval Church, and although in other countries theories are put forward for academic discussion without having much influence upon practical politics, in Meccania the powers that be are able to carry out their ideas without the obstruction which necessarily arises in countries where public opinion is more spontaneous. He had evaded the question as to the control of the Government, and had maintained that such a question had no meaning in a country where the people were not conscious of any difference between the State and themselves. Then there was this Mechow Festival. Now, it was either a sincere manifestation of a national admiration of Prince

Mechow, and an approval of his work in creating a Super-State with unlimited powers, or it was a proof that the ruling class, whatever that was, could manipulate the whole life of the nation as it pleased. Lastly, there was the idea that Johnson had thrown out. He was quite confident of the accuracy of his own view that the Military Class was the power behind everything, and that the whole elaborate bureaucratic organisation of society had for its motive and driving force the desire and the will to make Meccania a perfect instrument of militarism.

Up to this time I had been partly amused and partly annoyed by what I had seen and heard and experienced. I was amused by the meticulous regulation and organisation of all the petty details of life, by the pedantic precision of all the officials I had met, and by the utter absence of a sense of humour in the mentality of the Meccanian people. I had been annoyed by the meddlesome interference with my private habits, but I tried to disregard this, because, as an experienced traveller, I had sufficient experience to tell me that in every country one has to accommodate oneself to the customs and prejudices of the community. But most of all, I felt baffled by my failure to find out anything about the real life and thought and feeling of the people.

I determined that I would make a more serious attempt to get behind the screen which all this officialism set up between the people and a well-intentioned Foreign Observer like myself or Mr.

Johnson. I would find out whether the screen was erected only between the foreigner and the people, or whether the people themselves were so 'organised' that, even for them, intercourse was made difficult. I promised myself that Lickrod, with his genuine enthusiasm for every feature of Meccanian culture, would be much more likely to enlighten me than any person I had come in contact with before. We had still some days to spend in completing our general survey of industry in Mecco. As President of an important Literary Society, I expressed a desire to see how the whole business of literary production was conducted in Meccania, for I understood that several features in the system were quite unlike what could be found anywhere else in the world. Conductor Lickrod was almost eager to gratify my curiosity—at any rate up to a certain point.

"The printing industry," said he in answer to my questions, "is a perfect example of the effect of Prince Mechow's reforms. It would be impossible in any other country to do what we do, even if they employed three times the number of men. In other countries the waste of labour, not only manual labour but brain labour and business enterprise, is ridiculous. Look at the amount of advertising, the number of rival newspapers and magazines, the number of rival publishers of all sorts. It is a perfect chaos. Now we have no advertising, as advertising is understood abroad. Every commodity can be classified, whether it be a hair restorer or a mansion for sale. Our system of commerce gets rid of advertising miscellaneous commodities. The wholesale merchants have their regular catalogues issued to the trade, and the same system is extended to retail trade. For example, if you want to buy an article of clothing, apart from your regular uniform, you consult a directory of the retail dealers. Then you consult a catalogue of any particular firm at the bureau for retail trade, where you will find a catalogue of every shop in the town you happen to be in. There are no hoardings covered with posters tempting people, out of mere curiosity, to buy things they don't want. Now look at a typical newspaper in any foreign country. Half of it is covered with advertisements of concerts, theatrical performances, other amusements, sales, situations vacant and wanted, clothing, patent medicines, books—every imaginable thing. With us that is all unnecessary. The bureaux of employment do away with all advertisements for employment—but in any case we should require few of these, because our system of employment is so much better organised. As to concerts and theatres, everybody knows, through the official gazettes, what amusements are available for months in advance."

"You have not only got rid of the advertisements," I remarked, "but even of the newspapers themselves, I understand. I have certainly seen none except the local gazettes."

"Exactly; I was coming to that," he continued. "Look at the enormous waste of effort that goes to the production of forty or fifty big newspapers. What is the use of them? Every item of information can be classified. It may be a crime, an accident, an event in foreign politics, a new law, a trial, a new discovery in some branch of science or industry, and so on. Now look at all the ingenuity displayed in getting hold of some sort of account of these things at the earliest moment, in order to gratify the mere curiosity of crowds of ignorant people. Then look at the special articles, all or nearly all produced in haste, and the so-called leading articles, all designed to influence the mind of the public by giving some particular colour or interpretation to the alleged facts. Our official gazettes give the public all they require to know. The *Law Gazette*, issued each week, gives information about all the breaches of the law committed, all the important processes before the Law Courts, all the changes in the Law. All the 'articles' which are necessary to throw light upon legal matters are written by real experts. As you know, the journalist is extinct in Meccania. The Industrial Gazettes—one for each of the main branches of industry, with a general Industrial Gazette for matters affecting industry generally, contain everything required in a much more complete form than can be given in a daily newspaper. So you see that, applying the same principle to the various aspects of our public life, we are able to substitute one well-organised publication, dealing completely with all matters and issued with all the authority of the State, for the miscellaneous jumble of scraps which are called newspapers in other countries.

"Then look at the number of magazines; they represent a stage of culture which we have left entirely behind. We have our Literary Gazettes to keep the public informed about all the recent publications. We have our Quarterly Records for every department of knowledge. If you want the latest contributions to history or archæology, philology, ethnology, or anthropology, you know where to go for them. Everything is done by experts, and we do not go to the trouble of printing anything by anyone else on such subjects."

"Then you have no popular magazines such as would interest people who are not strictly students, but who take an interest in things?" I asked.

"No. As I said a moment ago, we have left that stage of culture behind. We provide a good education for all those who, we think, are able to utilise it for the good of the State. After that, every one is encouraged to pursue that branch of knowledge which will be most useful to him in his calling. In a certain sense every man is a specialist. We do not encourage people to dabble in things they only half understand."

" But is there not also a need," I said, " for what I may call general knowledge on the part of the public ? For instance, suppose a new law is to be introduced which is to affect people's lives, *everybody* is concerned, whether he is a specialist or not. Or suppose some question of public morals, or some question of political interest arises, you surely want the public to discuss such things. How, indeed, can your authorities keep in touch with the public mind unless there is some medium by which the general public can express itself ? "

" What you say," answered Lickrod, " only serves to demonstrate the truth of what I am trying to convey to you, namely, that our Culture is so differently conceived that you foreigners cannot understand our attitude. You use the expression ' public opinion.' Our psychologists will tell you exactly how that public opinion is formed. They made a careful study of it before we decided to replace it by something better. It was one of the superstitions of the nineteenth century, which has not only lingered on but has become a serious hinderance to the development of scientific government in all countries except Meccania. They actually allow their fiscal policy to be determined by ' public opinion.' Fiscal policy is entirely a matter for the State, and the only persons qualified to advise the State are the experts. You speak of public morals, but the business of guiding the morals of the nation is the highest function of the State itself. Now the organs through which every nation or State functions are determined and developed by the national consciousness: this consciousness expresses itself just as legitimately through experts as through an uninstructed public opinion."

"So you would be prepared to say, then," I said, "that your people fully acquiesce in the suppression or abolition of one of the institutions which most foreigners consider almost the last safeguard of liberty? I mean, of course, the daily press."

"The present generation of Meccanians, that is, the young people, say between twenty and thirty, have never known the Press. The older men were, I confess, bitterly opposed for some years, or at least a section of them were; but if anyone proposed to revive the Press nowadays he would be regarded as one would be who wished to revive steam-trams, or wigs, or general elections."

"But suppose some people were mad enough to want to publish a newspaper, could they not do so?" I asked.

"Well, there is no positive law against it, but it would be impossible, all the same."

"Why?"

"The expense would be very great, for one thing. There would be no advertisements, remember. They would not be allowed to publish news before it had been submitted to the censor, or before it was given to the public through the official gazettes. . . ."

" You need say no more," I said. " I quite see it would be impossible. The censorship extends to all printed matter, I gather ? "

" Certainly," he replied. " The State would be guilty of a grave neglect of its function as guardian of the Meccanian spirit if it permitted any scribbler who wished to seduce the minds of the people to mislead them."

" But," I could not help replying, " I thought that your people were on the whole so well educated that there would be less danger of their being misled in Meccania than in any country. Also I have been informed that all the best writers are already in the employ of the State ; and, further, that the people generally are so completely at one in sentiment with the spirit and policy of the State that there could be no real danger from the free expression of opinion."

Conductor Lickrod smiled. It was a benevolent, almost a pitying smile.

" I perceive," he said, " that some of the most commonplace axioms of our policy seem like abstruse doctrines to people whose culture is less advanced. But I think I can make all this clear. Your argument is that our people are well instructed, our writers—the best of them—are employed by the State, and our common loyalty to the Meccanian ideal is so firmly established that even a free Press, or at least the free expression of opinion in books, would give rise to no danger. Now do you not see that it is only by means of our system—so wisely conceived by the greatest statesman who ever lived—that we *have* this instructed public, that we *have* all the best writers in the service of the State, that we *possess* this common allegiance to the Meccanian spirit? When we have achieved what no other nation has achieved, should we not be fools to introduce an entirely contrary principle, and for the sake of what? In order to provide an opportunity for the few people who are not loyal to Meccania to attack the very State whose children they are. For, examine what it is you propose. No one who is a loyal Meccanian finds the least fault with our present system. It has the enormous advantage over all the systems of other countries that, without any waste, it provides the most authentic information about every conceivable subject, it gives the public the benefit of the services of such a body of experts as no other country possesses. And the people who would write such books as *you* are thinking of; who would support them? They are already fully employed in some manner, and in the manner considered by the State to be the most useful. I assure you this is a purely academic discussion, for no one would dream of putting into practice such a proposal."

"There must be something in the mentality of the Meccanians very different from that of other nations, and that is all the more surprising because, at least according to the ethnologists, they are not racially different from several of the surrounding nations."

"That is quite true, with some slight reservations. We are not a pure race by any means. We have racial elements within our nation which are indeed distinct from those of the surrounding nations, and they have perhaps contributed to the final result much more than in proportion to their actual numbers. What you call Latin culture has never done more than furnish us with the material for such elements of our culture as we wished to utilise. You see it has hardly affected our language. No, the Meccanian culture of to-day is the result of education and scientific statesmanship."

"Excuse my putting the question so bluntly," I said, "but it seems to me that the principles you have put forward would justify even a revival of an institution known in mediæval times, and even later, as the Inquisition. I suppose there is no institution corresponding to that in Meccania ?"

"It is quite unnecessary. And that is one powerful argument in favour of our system of controlling the Press. That control, together with our other institutions of which it forms part—our whole polity is a perfect harmony—makes an 'Inquisition,' as you call it, an anachronism."

"But," I said, "I was told by one of your own people of something that seems to a mere outsider to resemble an incipient Inquisition."

"Indeed," he said, "and what is that ?"

"Well, I gathered that in certain cases the Special Medical Board uses its discretionary power to incarcerate persons whose opinions or convictions make it impossible for them to embrace what I may call the Meccanian ideals of life."

I felt I was treading on delicate ground, but as Prigge on a previous occasion had openly approved of putting people into lunatic asylums if they did not accept the Authority of the Super-State I felt justified in sounding Lickrod on the point. To my surprise he betrayed no embarrassment.

"You are probably not aware," he said, "of the remarkable strides that have been made by our medical scientists in Meccania during the last fifty years. The pathological side of psychology has received great attention, with the consequence that our specialists are able to detect mental disease in cases where it would not be suspected by less skilled doctors. I believe I am right in saying that our experts detected the disease now widely recognised as *Znednettlapseiwz* (Chronic tendency to Dissent) long before it was known in other countries that such a characteristic was in any way connected with brain disease. The microbe has been fully described in the twenty-seventh volume of the *Report of the Special Medical Board*. The first clue to the existence of this disease was discovered during the great war, or perhaps a little later. A number of people persisted in putting forward views concerning the origin of the war, which were totally at variance with the official, and even the Imperial, explanatory statements made for the enlightenment of the public. At the time, it was regarded as just mental perversity. But what led to the discovery was that, after ten, and even fifteen years in some cases, notwithstanding every natural inducement to desist from such perversity, these people deliberately and persistently maintained the objectivity of their hallucinations. Experiments were made; they were under close observation for some years, and at length Doctor Sikofantis-Sangwin produced his theory and confidently predicted that the bacillus would be found in a few years. From that time the path was clear. The disease was most rife some forty years ago, soon after the beginning of Prince Mechow's premiership; but since then it has almost disappeared. You see it is not hereditary, and the normal conditions of Meccanian life are very unfavourable to its development. But coming back to your point, although no doubt this is what has given rise to the calumny that the Special Medical Board uses its powers as an Inquisition, there is not a vestige of truth in the charge. Each case—and the cases are becoming very rare indeed—is investigated on strictly psycho-physiological lines. The patients in all cases are isolated, and placed under observation for some months before any pronouncement is made."

" Your explanation is as usual most illuminating," I replied, " and the patience with which you deal with my questions emboldens me to put to you some further difficulties that have been puzzling me."

" Proceed," replied Lickrod encouragingly.

" Well now," I said, " your whole national culture is so elaborately perfect, from the standpoint of its basic principles, that it is certainly well worth studying by any student of sociology or politics or economics; yet we foreigners find ourselves hampered at many points whenever we wish to get into contact with certain kinds of facts. For instance, we may wish to find out what are the ideas, the current thoughts and feelings, of the various groups, and even individuals, who make up society. We cannot go and live with people and converse freely with them. I have not been able to understand why your Government takes such precautions to keep secret, as it were, facts which in any other country are as open as the day."

" That is not at all difficult to answer by anyone who really understands the principles of our Culture, and I am surprised that none of the conductors who have instructed you have explained it—that is, if you have asked them," he answered. " You have been hampered, you say. Yes, but you have been assisted too. You have been shown things in a way that would be impossible in most other countries within such a short time. Our Government has paid great attention to the instruction of foreigners. Instead of leaving them to gather all sorts of erroneous impressions, it provides them with authentic information. If, on the other hand, there are things which it does not wish foreigners to know, it takes care, and quite rightly, that they shall not obtain the information by any illicit means. For instance, if you were foolish enough to attempt to obtain information about our military affairs, you would find yourself against a blank wall; and, if I may say so, you might hurt your head against the wall. But then there are matters which, without being secret, cannot well be investigated by the individual inquirer. Take such a thing as the current thought of any particular class or group. Only a trained and well-equipped social-psychologist is capable of making such an inquiry. The liability to error is tremendous. All the books written by travellers reveal this. We do not wish to be exploited by casual and irresponsible travellers. We provide opportunities, under proper conditions, for expert investigators; but very few are willing to comply with the conditions. Besides, our Culture, like all the finest products of the human intellect, is a very delicate thing. When we have carefully educated our people in the Meccanian spirit we are not prepared to expose them to the insidious influences of irresponsible busybodies. Every Meccanian is valuable in our eyes, and just as we protect him from infection in the shape of physical disease, so we protect him from the more insidious but not less injurious influence of foreign ideas. You will find plenty of philosophical justification for that policy in the writings of Plato and Aristotle—two philosophers who are studied in all the foreign universities but whose systems of thought are utterly misunderstood except in Meccania."

CHAPTER X

CONVERSATIONS

IT must have been more than a week after my long talk with Conductor Lickrod that I was sitting one evening in the hotel with Mr. Johnson and a certain Francarian gentleman to whom he had introduced me, when the latter made a suggestion that has since proved very useful to me. Mr. Villele the Francarian is a short and rather stout man of middle age, with a pair of merry black eyes, a swarthy complexion, and dark hair beginning to turn grey. He professes to find Meccania and the Meccanians amusing, but I suspect from the nature of his sarcasms that he entertains a deep hatred of them. We were talking of my journal when he said, " And what is the use of it ? "

" Well," I said, " I do not flatter myself that I can produce a great literary work, but the facts I have been able to place on record are so interesting in themselves that I believe my countrymen would welcome a plain straightforward account of my visit to this most extraordinary country."

" I have heard," he said, " that the Chinese have very good verbal memories. Have you committed your record to memory in its entirety ? "

" Why should I ? " I replied ; " it is to save my memory that I am taking the trouble of making such full notes, even of such things as conversations."

" And how do you propose to get your journal out of the country ? "

" I propose to take it with me when I return," I said.

At this he turned to Johnson and laughed, but immediately apologised for his apparent rudeness.

" And what about the Censor ? " he asked.

" Surely," I replied, " these people take such precautions not to let us foreigners see anything they do not want us to see, that they cannot object to a faithful record being made of what they do permit us to see ! "

" Then you have not even read Regulation 79 of the Law concerning Foreign Observers."

" What is that ? " I asked.

" Simply that foreigners are not allowed to take out of the country anything they have not been permitted to bring in, except with the consent of the Chief Inspector of Foreign Observers."

" And you think they will object ? "

" I have not the slightest doubt."

" But it is written partly in Chinese ; they would have to translate it."

" All the more reason for detaining it. If you ever get it again, it will be in a few years, after it has been translated for the benefit of the Sociological Section of the Ministry of Culture."

" What do you advise me to do, then ? " I asked.

" Have you any friends at the Chinese Embassy ? " he asked.

" I have no personal friends. At least I have not troubled to inquire. I have had no business at the Embassy ; there seemed no reason why I should trouble them."

" There is a fellow-countryman of yours here in Mecco who is *persona grata* with the Authorities," said Villele, " but he is rather a dark horse."

" A dark horse ? " I said.

" He is a sort of convert to Meccanianism. He has written books in appreciation of Meccanian principles, Meccanian ideals, Meccanian institutions, and so forth. They are eagerly read by the Meccanians. They even use them in their colleges. I have read them, and they seem to me very clever indeed. I translated them for the benefit of my countrymen, and I am not exactly an admirer of things Meccanian."

I must have looked rather puzzled, for Mr. Johnson came to my rescue.

" Mr. Villele means," he said, " that these books have a double meaning. I have read one of them. Under cover of the most exuberant flattery he gives such an impression of the cold-blooded devilishness of the system, that some of us suspect his real purpose to be that of exposing the whole business."

"He knows more of Meccania than anyone who is not a high official," said Villele; "and if you want to pursue your investigations any further, and incidentally get your manuscript conveyed out of the country, I should advise you to seek an interview with him."

"Will that be possible," I asked, "without arousing suspicion?"

"Oh, quite easily," answered Villele. "*He* is above suspicion, if you are not," he added, smiling. "He holds a weekly *salon* for foreigners, and you can easily get permission to attend. After that I leave it to you, and him."

That evening we went on talking a long time. Mr. Villele related some remarkable things, but I was not sure whether he was merely making fun of the Meccanians.

"You have not seen much of the Meccanian women?" he remarked.

"No," I said; "I have had no opportunity."

"They are quite as wonderful as the men," he said. "You never heard, for instance, of the great Emancipation Act, Regulation 19 of the Marital Law?"

"No," I replied; "what is it?"

"No Meccanian woman is obliged to submit to the embraces of her lawful husband."

"But how did the men ever consent to such a law?" I asked; "for in this country it is the men who make the laws."

" It is rather a queer story," he replied. " It is quite a long time ago, forty years or more, since a movement arose among the women, influenced no doubt by the women's movement in Europe, which had for its object, or one of its objects, greater freedom from the domestic tyranny of the Meccanian husband. Some of them, of course, thought that the way to secure everything they wanted was to get the right to vote for the National Council ; but the wiser among them saw that the vote was merely a bad joke. Anybody could have the vote, because it was worth nothing ; seeing that the powers of the representatives were being reduced to nothing. All the same, this women's movement, such as it was, was the nearest approach to a revolutionary movement that the Meccanians have ever shown themselves capable of. Once more our dear old Prince Mechow came to the rescue. He was a real genius."

" But I thought you did not admire the Mechow reforms ? " I interrupted.

" I do not ; but I recognise a genius when I see him. Believe me, Prince Mechow was the first Meccanian to understand his countrymen. He knew exactly what they wanted, what they would stand, what they could do, what they could be made to believe. He was absorbed in his early reforms when this women's movement broke out, and some people were afraid of it. He attacked the problem in his characteristic fashion. He knew the women didn't want political power; he knew also that there was not the slightest danger of them getting it; but he saw immense possibilities in having the women as his allies in certain of his reforms, especially his Eugenic reforms. He hit upon a really brilliant idea. I don't suppose you can guess what it was?"

"How can I?" I said. "All this is quite new to me."

"Well, if you had read Meccanian literature, or even the writings of the old travellers in Meccania—your predecessors as Foreign Observers—you would know that the Meccanian women are the most primitive in Europe. They have one ideal as regards men. They have a superstitious admiration for physical strength. If a Meccanian woman were really free to choose her mate, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred she would choose the strongest man. They have always been like that. Probably many primitive peoples have had that characteristic, but the Meccanians have preserved that trait longest. You think I am joking or spinning a theory?"

"I was thinking that as they have had the same marriage laws as the rest of Europe for many centuries, the fact, if it is a fact, cannot be of much practical importance," I said.

"The fact itself is vouched for by dozens of writers among the Meccanians. They pride themselves on having preserved these primitive characteristics; they glory in never having been influenced by Latin culture. The marriage laws you speak of have been adopted by the men, in self-defence, so to speak. In very early times the Meccanian marriage laws were essentially the same as they have been for two thousand years, and the penalties on the women for infractions of the marriage laws were more severe in practice than in any other country. Notice the facts: breaches of the 'moral code' before marriage are regarded very lightly: illegitimacy in Meccania, as is proved by statistics, was more prevalent than in most countries; but the men took care that breaches after marriage should be severely dealt with. I told you it was a long story, and I have not yet come to the point. For twenty or thirty years before Prince Mechow got into the saddle all the young hot-headed Meccanian patriots got Eugenics on the brain, but none of them knew how to put their ideas into practice. Mechow himself was a Eugenist of the most brutal type. He believed that if he could once utilise this primitive instinct of the Meccanian women, he could do something much more effective than eliminating certain feeble types, which was all that the Eugenist theorists had so far aimed at. He proposed to give every woman the right to choose, within limits, the father of her children. He knew that all the Meccanian women were obsessed with a frantic admiration for the Military Class—in the old days it was the ambition of every woman to marry an officer, and that was why the officers who were not well-to-do never had any difficulty in getting a rich *partie*. Well, he actually made a law to the effect that any woman could claim a sort of exemption from the marital rights of her husband, upon the recommendation of an authorised medical man."

" But why on earth did the men consent to such a law ? " I asked once more.

" That was easily done. You had only to invoke the Meccanian spirit, devotion to the supreme interests of the State, the opinion of the experts and all the rest of it. The opposition was stifled. The three highest classes were all for it ; the women supported it, and although they had no political power they made opposition impossible."

" And what effect has this law had ? I am afraid I do not see how it would effect the purpose Prince Mechow had in view," I said.

" The consequences have been enormous. I do not mean that the law by itself effected much, but taken as part of a system it solved the whole problem from Mechow's point of view."

" But how ? " I asked, somewhat puzzled.

" You understand, I suppose, the system of medical inspection and medical supervision and medical treatment ? "

" To a certain extent," I replied.

" Well, you realise perhaps that, in the hands of a patriotic medical staff, the system can be so worked that every woman who is ‘ approved ’ can be provided with a ‘ eugenic ’ mate from an approved panel, drawn chiefly from the Military Class, eh ? ”

“ Is this one of Mr. Villele’s jokes at the expense of the Meccanians ? ” I asked Mr. Johnson.

“ He is telling the story in his own way,” answered Johnson, “ but in substance it is quite true.”

“ But it sounds incredible,” I said. “ What do the husbands say to it ? ”

“ Oh, the business is done very quietly. A woman is ordered a ‘ cure ’ by the ‘ medical authority,’ and she goes away for a little time. The men on the panel are kept in training, like pugilists used to be. As for the husbands—did you ever attend any lectures in the Universities on Meccanian ethics ? Of course you have not been in the country very long. Jealousy is regarded as an obsolete virtue, or vice, whichever you like. Besides, you must not imagine the custom affects large numbers. Probably not more than 10 per cent of the women, chiefly in the Fifth and Sixth, and to some extent in the Fourth, Class, are affected.”

“ But I should have thought that social caste would be an insuperable obstacle,” I said.

“ Surely not ! When did you hear that women were chosen for such purposes from any particular class ? It is not a question of marriage.”

“ There is one circumstance,” interposed Mr. Johnson, “ that has some bearing on this subject.

Domestic life in Meccania for generations past has been based on quite a different ideal from that prevalent in other parts of Europe. A Meccanian in the old days used to choose a wife very much as he would choose a horse. She was thought of as the mother of children; in fact, the Meccanian sociologists used to maintain that this was one of the marks of their superiority over other European nations. Conjugal affection was recognised only as a sort of by-product of marriage. Of course they always pretended to cultivate a kind of Romanticism because they wrote a lot of verse about the spring, and moonlight and kisses and love-longing, but their Romanticism never went beyond that. As the object of Meccanian sentiment, one person would do just as well as another."

"Our friend seems very much surprised at many things he finds in Meccania," remarked Mr. Villele, "and my own countrymen, and more especially my own countrywomen, only half believe the accounts they read about this country, simply because they think human nature is the same everywhere; but then they are ignorant of history. Civilisations just as extraordinary have existed in ancient times, created through the influence of a few dominant ideas. The Meccanians are a primitive people with a mechanical culture. They have never been civilised, because they have no conception of an individual soul. Consequently they find it easy to devote themselves to a common purpose."

The conversation went on for a long time. It was a warm summer evening and we were sitting in the garden at the back of the hotel, otherwise we should have been rather more guarded in our remarks. As we parted, Mr. Villele repeated his advice to seek an interview with Mr. Kwang, as he called him. (His name was Sz-ma-Kwang, but for convenience I shall allude to him as Mr. Kwang.) A day or two later, I contrived to get an interview with him, and although Conductor Lickrod was present I soon discovered that Mr. Kwang and I were members of the same secret society. He promised that I should see him again before long, and that he would be happy to assist me in any way he could. He told Lickrod that he had been doing his best, for the last five years, to induce the Chinese Government to send more 'observers' to Meccania; but his enthusiasm for Meccania had perhaps defeated its own object, as it caused him to be mistrusted. His writings on Meccania were well known, and it was thought that he was trying to proselytise. He spoke most flatteringly of me to Lickrod, and said that, in view of the influence I should have in my own country, it was well worth while giving me every facility to see all I wished. He would guarantee that, under his tutelage, I should soon learn to appreciate things from the right point of view.

Two days after this, I received a message to call on the Chief Inspector of Foreigners. He received me most politely, and almost apologised for not having had time to see me before. He had only just learnt that I was a friend of the excellent Mr. Kwang. He said I should be permitted to visit Mr. Kwang whenever I chose, and that I was now at liberty to make use of the letters of introduction I had brought with me to several persons in Meccania. It would not be necessary for me to be accompanied by a 'conductor' every day. He would transfer me to Class B, Stage II. Class B meant Foreign Observers staying not less than six months; and Stage II. meant that they were permitted to submit a plan each week showing how they proposed to spend the following week; so that on the days which were occupied to the satisfaction of the Inspector of Foreign Observers for the district, the services of a 'conductor' could be dispensed with.

I did not know whether to avail myself of my new-found liberty or not. For when I came to talk the matter over with the only person at hand, Conductor Lickrod, I found that it was not very easy to prepare a plan that would be accepted by the Authorities, unless I were prepared to pursue some definite line of research. When I talked of taking a few walks in the poorer quarters, calling in for a few lectures in the University, hearing some concerts, and seeing some plays and other amusements, looking round the museums,—a programme innocent enough in all conscience,—Lickrod said no Inspector would sanction such a miscellaneous time-table for an observer in Stage II. I was not qualified to attend concerts; I had not yet received permission to visit the theatre. Unless I were pursuing some particular study, I could only visit the museums in company with a conductor. As for a stroll through the poorer quarters, he failed to see the object of that. On the whole, I decided to stick to Lickrod for another week at any rate. I asked if I might see something of Education in Mecco. He said certainly, if I desired to make a study of Meccanian Pedagogics for a period of not less than four months. Otherwise it would not be possible to enter any of the educational institutions. I could get permission to read in the Great Library, if I would specify the subject, or subjects, and show that I was qualified to pursue them. In that way I could read up Meccanian Education. If I were not willing to do this, he advised me to talk to Mr. Johnson, who was a keen and capable student of Meccanian Pedagogics.

I suggested investigating Meccanian political institutions, but similar difficulties arose there. I could only study Meccanian politics if I were registered as a specialist, and for that I should have to obtain permission from the Department for Foreign Affairs as well as from the Chief Inspector of Foreign Observers. He remarked, however, that in his opinion there was little to study beyond what could be got from books. The political system of Meccania was really simplicity itself when once the fundamental principles had been grasped. I replied that in most countries it took a foreigner rather a long time to understand the views and policy of the many different groups and sections in the representative assemblies. Each of them usually had their organisations and their special point of view. He replied that in Meccania the State itself was the only political organisation.

"But," I said, "when your members of the National Council meet, do they not fall into groups according to their views upon policy?"

"They are grouped according to classes, of course," he answered. "Each of the seven classes has the same number of representatives, and there is no doubt a tendency for the representatives of each class to consider things somewhat from the point of view of the interests of their class. But the members have no meetings, except in the full assembly and in the committees. Such group-meetings form no part of the Constitution. We do not do things by halves. When the State decided to have nothing to do with party government, it decided also not to have anything to do with group government. There is no room for such trifling in Meccania. So you see there is nothing for you to investigate in this direction."

"The classes themselves, then? Is there no body of opinion, no collective political tradition or sentiment cultivated by the various classes ? "

" You might find something there," said Lickrod, musing a little. " But except in the shape of books I do not know how you would get at it."

" But all books are censored, are they not ? " I said.

" Certainly, but how does that affect the question ? "

" Books would hardly give me a truthful idea of all the currents of thought."

" But surely you cannot suppose that the State would assist you in trying to discover things which, by its deliberate action, it had already thought it desirable to suppress ? " he answered. " Besides," he added, " such things belong rather to the pathology of politics. By the way, you would find some useful matter in Doctor Squelcher's great work on Political Pathology."

" That is a new term to me," I said.

" Doctor Squelcher's researches have proved invaluable to the Special Medical Board in connection with the disease *Znednettlapseiwz* (Chronic tendency to Dissent) which you also had not heard of."

In view of this conversation my attempt to investigate Meccanian politics did not seem likely to meet with much success.

Before seeing Mr. Kwang again, I received an invitation to dine with a certain Industrial Director Blobber, one of the persons to whom I had a letter of introduction. He lived in a very pleasant villa in the Third Quarter, and as it was the first time I had had an opportunity of seeing the interior of any private *ménage,* I was naturally rather curious to observe everything in the house. The door was opened by a servant in a livery of grey. The hall was spotlessly clean, and decorated in yellow tones, to indicate the class to which my host belonged. I was shown into what I took to be a drawing-room, the prevailing tone of which was also yellow. The first thing that struck me was the peculiar construction of the easy chairs in the room. They were all fitted with mechanical contrivances which enabled them to be adjusted in any position. At first I thought they were invalids' chairs, but they were all alike. The other furniture suggested the latest phases of Meccanian decorative Art, but it would be tedious to describe it in detail. The frieze was decorated with a curious geometrical design executed in the seven colours. There were silk hangings which at first I took to be Chinese, but which I soon saw were imitations. The carpet had the Imperial arms woven in the centre. It seems it is one of the privileges of officials of the Third Class to have the Imperial arms as a decoration on certain articles of furniture; only members of the Second and First Classes may have their own arms. The mantelpiece was large and clumsy. A bust of the reigning Emperor stood on one side and one of Prince Mechow on the other.

Mr. Blobber joined me in a few minutes. He was dressed in a lounge suit of bright yellow with green buttons. (The buttons indicated that he had been promoted from the Fourth Class.) He was polite, in a condescending sort of way, and spoke to me as if I had been a child. He was a foot taller than I am, and decidedly portly in build. He had a red face, a rather lumpy nose and a large bald forehead. He wore spectacles and was decorated with the 'Mechow' beard, which he not only stroked but combed in my presence.

After the first formal greetings, he said, "So you have come all the way from the other side of the world to see our wonderful country. You had all the countries in the world to choose from, and you had the good sense to come to Meccania. You decided well, and I hope you have been profiting by your stay."

"Yes," I said; "I have seen a great many things to admire already."

"For example?" he said.

"The wonderful roof of your Great Central Station," I said.

"Ah, yes unique, is it not? We have, of course, the finest railway stations in the world, and the finest railway system too. But that is only part of our industrial organisation."

"You have indeed a wonderful industrial system," I said, "and no industrial problem."

"No industrial problem?" he replied. "We have a great many. We do not produce half enough. Of course, compared with other countries, it may seem that we are doing very well, but we are not satisfied."

"I meant rather that you have no disturbances, no strikes, no Trade Unionism or anything of that sort."

"Of course, you cannot help thinking of what you have seen in other countries. No, we have no time for nonsense of that kind. But I take no interest in that sort of thing. I have enough to do with my work. The chief Director of the Imperial Porcelain Factory is a busy man, I assure you."

At this moment Madame Blobber came in and I was introduced to her. She was a great contrast to her husband in many ways. She was tall and rather thin—at any rate for a Meccanian—and would have been graceful but for a certain stiffness and coldness in her manner and bearing. She had a pale face with cold blue eyes. Her mouth was rather large, and her lips thin and flexible. While her husband's voice was leathery, like that of most Meccanians, hers was thin and penetrating, but not loud. We crossed into the dining-room. A butler in a chocolate-coloured livery saw that all was in order, and left the room. Waiting was unnecessary. The first dishes were on the table, where they were kept hot by electricity, and others on the sideboard were afterwards handed by a woman servant in a grey uniform.

It was a rather silent meal. Mr. Blobber was much occupied with his food, which he evidently enjoyed, and at a later stage he relapsed into a sleepy condition. Madame Blobber then took the lead in the conversation. She was evidently a very well-read woman, especially in all matters relating to Art. I suspected she had no children and had made herself a blue-stocking. She talked like a professor, and with all the dogmatism of one. She said the Chinese had never had any true knowledge of colour. They had merely hit upon some colours which were pleasing to a crude taste. The Meccanians in fifty years had absorbed all the knowledge the Chinese had ever possessed, and much more besides."

I ventured to say that there were still some secrets of artistic production in porcelain that foreigners had not discovered. She laughed at the idea. The 'secrets,' she said, were the very things the Meccanian experts had rejected as of no value. I might as well say that the Chinese political constitution was a secret because the Meccanians had not adopted it. When I suggested that scientific knowledge was not a complete equipment for Art, and would not necessarily increase the artistic powers of a nation, she said this was a mere superstition. Art was not a mystery. Every work of art admitted of being analysed; the laws of its production were ascertainable; and it could be reproduced or modified in every conceivable way.

I asked if the same were true of music. I had heard, I said, that for nearly a hundred years even the Meccanians had produced no great musician.

"Another superstition," she declared. "The great musicians, as they were called, were merely the pioneers of music. Their works were much overrated in foreign countries. We have proved by analysis," she said, "that they were merely groping for their effects. *We* know what they wanted to effect, and we have discovered how to get those effects. Musical psychology was an unknown science a hundred years ago. Why, the old composers had simply no means of testing the psychological effects of their works by experiment."

"I am afraid I am very ignorant of musical science," I said. "In fact, I did not even know there was such a thing as a science of music."

"What did you think music was?" she almost snapped.

"Simply one of the Arts," I said.

"There can be no art in the proper sense without a science."

"But I thought you Europeans considered that in Sculpture, for example, the Ancients had never been surpassed; and yet they had no science of sculpture."

"Their science was probably lost: but *we* have recovered the true science. The basis of all sculpture is accurate measurement. Whatever has bulk, whatever occupies space, can be measured, if your instruments are fine enough. Our instruments *are* fine enough. We can reproduce any statue ever made by any artist."

"But that is only copying," I said. "How do you create?"

"The process is a little more elaborate, but the principles are exactly the same. Even the classical sculptors had models, had they not? Well, our sculptors also use models; they pose them in thousands of different positions until they have the attitude they want; they have instruments to enable them to fix them in position, and the rest is merely accurate measurement."

"I should never have imagined that sculpture had been carried to such a point," I remarked. "Is there much of it in Meccania?"

"Not a great deal of the finer work. Accurate measurement is a slow and costly business even with our improved instruments."

"Tell me," I said,—"you see I am very ignorant of Art as understood in Meccania,—has Literature been pursued by the same scientific methods?"

"It depends upon what you mean by Literature," replied Madame Blobber.

"Broadly speaking," I said, "I mean the art of expressing ideas in language that satisfies one's sense of beauty."

"All our professional writers go through a period of training in the particular department they cultivate. For example, our writers of history are very carefully trained, writers of scientific treatises also."

"But what of your novelists and poets?" I asked.

"We do not specially encourage the writing of novels. All stories are merely variations of a few themes: all the stories worth writing have been written long ago. We print a certain number of the old novels, and we employ a few specialists to 'vamp' up new stories from the old materials, chiefly for the benefit of the lower classes. We Meccanians never really took to novel-writing, except under foreign influence, and that passed away long ago. The theme of almost all novels is domestic life and individual passion: they treat of phases of thought and feeling that our Culture tends more and more to make obsolete. We have developed the Drama much more; in fact, the drama takes the place of the novel with us."

"I have heard something of your Drama from Dr. Dodderer," I said.

"Indeed! Then you understand the fourfold treatment. That in itself would explain why we have discarded the novel. We still keep up the philosophical parable, which is a sort of link between the novel and our modern drama."

"I am afraid I should find it difficult to appreciate some of your plays," I said; "*Uric Acid*, for instance."

"That is only because our mental environment is in advance of the rest of Europe. Physical science, including of course medical science, is part of our mental furniture: we have assimilated whole masses of ideas that are still unfamiliar to other peoples. Naturally our drama finds its material in the affairs that interest us."

"And Poetry?" I said. "Is Poetry still cultivated?"

"Naturally! Most of our dramas are in poetry: our language lends itself admirably; it is almost as easy to write poetry as prose in our language."

"But is there no lyrical poetry?"

"Certainly; we utilise it as one of the means of cultivating the Meccanian spirit, especially among the young. No poetry is published unless it contributes to the uplifting of the Meccanian spirit."

At this point Director Blobber woke up and proposed that we should retire to his study for a glass of spirits and a cigar. Madame Blobber left us, and for the next half-hour I did my best to keep Mr. Blobber awake. But it was evident he wanted to go to bed, and by half-past nine I left the house, without any desire to see either of my hosts again.

Two days later I received another invitation, this time to dine with an Under-Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I had not presented any letters of introduction to him. I could therefore only suspect that this invitation was in some way due to Mr. Kwang. I went, of course; but I could hardly help wondering what was in store for me. Under-Secretary Count Krafft belonged to one of the great families and wore the uniform of the Second Class, with a badge to indicate that he was now in the Civil Service, although of course he had served as an officer in the army. His wife was apparently dining elsewhere, for I saw no sign of her, and we dined *tête-à-tête* in a small apartment in his large mansion in the Second Quarter. He was much more a man of the world than the others I had met, and in his manners resembled the men of good family whom I had met in Luniland. After a short preliminary talk, about nothing in particular, he said he was sorry that he had not learnt of my presence in Mecco when I first arrived, particularly as I was a friend of Mr. Kwang.

"The applications from foreigners for permission to travel in Meccania," he said, by way of apology, "are not very numerous, and they are always referred to me for my signature. Yours reached us from Luniland, and was regarded as that of a mere globe-trotter. It is a pity you did not give the name of your friend, Mr. Kwang, as a reference. We think very highly of Mr. Kwang, and I should be pleased to give special facilities to any of his friends. I don't suppose you have been neglected," he added; "our officials have instructions to pay attention to the comfort of all Foreign Observers, and I am sure we do more for them than any Government I am acquainted with."

We were by this time about half-way through dinner, and under its influence I ventured upon a mild joke.

"You do everything for them," I said, "except leave them alone."

He took this in good part.

"You have been in Luniland," he remarked, "where every one does what he pleases. When you have spent as long a time here you will appreciate the wisdom of our arrangements. No doubt it seems a little irksome at first, and perhaps rather dull, especially as you have seen only the mere routine aspects of the life of the lower and middle classes—I use the old-fashioned terms, you see. But how else would you arrange matters? We cannot invite all foreign visitors, indiscriminately, to take part in our higher social life, and it would not be fair to our own citizens to allow foreigners a greater liberty than we allow to ourselves."

"So you put us in a strait-jacket," I said, laughing, "because you have to put your whole nation in a strait-jacket."

"Our whole nation in a strait-jacket," he replied, with a smile. "So that is how it strikes you, is it?"

"Well, isn't it so?" I said. "Your children are sorted out while they are at school, their play is turned into useful employment, their careers are decided for them; hardly any of them rise out of their original class. Then everybody is under the eye of the Time Department, everybody is inspected and looked after from the cradle to the grave. It is almost impossible to commit a real crime or to set up any independent institution. There is, you must admit, a certain want of freedom in your arrangements."

"But of what people are you speaking?" said Count Krafft. "You seem to have confined your attention to the lower classes. For them, in all countries, something of a strait-jacket is needed surely. Certainly it is for ours. We know our own people. When they are properly drilled and led they do wonders, but left to themselves they have always relapsed into laziness and barbarism, or else have burst out into anarchy and revolutionary fury."

"But what scope does your system allow for their energies?" I asked. "Every aspect of life seems confined by your meticulous regulations."

"That is an illusion," he replied. "You see, we are a highly intellectual people and it is quite natural for us to formulate regulations. Modern life is necessarily complex, and the chief difference between us and other nations is that we recognise the complexity and organise our activities accordingly. We are simply in advance of other nations, that is all. Take a simple thing like Railways. We organised our Railway system to suit our national purposes instead of leaving them to commercial enterprise. Take the Education of the people. The State took charge of it fifty years before other nations recognised its vital importance. Take the question of Public Health; even those States which prate about individual liberty have had to follow in our wake and organise the medical service. Besides, it is only by organising the activities of the lower classes that the State can maintain its supremacy."

"I see," I replied, "the strait-jacket is for the lower classes. I thought it was a garment worn by everybody."

"The expression was yours," he said, with an indulgent smile. "We certainly do not regard it as a strait-jacket."

"That is perhaps because the ruling classes do not wear it," I replied.

"We do not recognise any classes as ruling classes," he said suavely. "It is an obsolete expression."

"But I thought you liked to recognise facts and call things by their proper names," I replied.

"Certainly we do," he answered. "But which are the ruling classes? The Super-State is the supreme and only ruler in Meccania."

"Even in a Super-State," I said, "I should have thought, from what you have said, that some groups of persons really wielded the power of the State."

" Under the crude organisation of most foreign States that is quite possible," answered Count Krafft; " but the essence of the Super-State is that, in it, power cannot be exercised without authority, and only these persons are authorised through whom the Super-State chooses to express its will. It places everybody in such a position as enables him to render the greatest service to the State that he is capable of rendering. Consequently no fault can be found, by any class or section, with the power exercised by any other class or section; because they are merely the instruments of the State itself."

" That sounds a very comfortable doctrine for those who happen to wield the power," I said. " It leaves no room for any 'opposition.'"

" The Super-State would not be the Super-State if it contained within it any opposition," he replied. " You ought to read the speech of Prince Mechow on the Super-State as the final expression of the Meccanian spirit," he went on. " Foreigners are apt to confuse the Super-State with an Autocracy. It is essentially different. In an autocracy of the crude, old-fashioned type, an exterior power is visible, and your talk of ruling classes would be appropriate there. In the Super-State all the functions are so organised that the whole body politic acts as one man. We educate the will of the component units in such a way that all conflicting impulses are eradicated. After all, that was the ideal of the Catholic Church. Prince Mechow applied the same principle when he reformed our Educational system. A good Meccanian would no more seek to violate the obligations laid upon him by the Super-State than a good Catholic would seek to commit deadly sin."

"Then there is no room for a Free Press in the Super-State," I remarked.

He saw my point and replied, "A 'Free Press,' as you call it, would be an anachronism. What necessity is there for it? Its function has disappeared. It only existed during a brief historical phase in the earlier development of the modern State. Our great Prince Bludiron was the first to perceive its inconsistency with the line of true development. Prince Mechow absorbed all the functions of the independent professions, and among them those of the journalists, who were always an element of weakness in the State."

"But what, then, is the object of this complete Unity which, as far as I can make out, the Super-State seems always to be aiming at?" I asked.

"The object?" he replied, almost bored by my pertinacity. "Unity is the law of all organic life. We are simply more advanced in our development than other States, that is all."

"Then it is not true that all this super-organisation is for the purpose of fostering national power?" I said.

"That is he told argument of the weak against the strong, the poor against the rich, the ignorant against the educated. Every healthy person is a strong person; the rich man is stronger than the poor man; the educated man is stronger than the ignorant. The modern State, even among our neighbours, is infinitely 'stronger' than the incoherent political organisms of earlier times. It cannot help itself. Its resources are enormously greater. How can the Super-State help being strong? No State deliberately seeks to weaken itself, or deprive itself of its natural force." Then, as if tired of the discussion into which our conversation had led us, he said, "But these are all matters about which you will learn much more from my friend the Professor of State Science. I am afraid I have been dishing up one of his old lectures. You will find this liqueur quite palatable."

We then drifted on to more trivial topics. He said I had spent too long among the petty officials, grubbing about with my Tour No. 4. I ought to see something of better society. Unfortunately it was the dead season just then, and I might have to wait a little time, but there were still some dinners at the University. Some of the professors never went out of Mecco and would be glad to entertain me.

We parted on very good terms. His manner had been friendly, and if he had done little besides expound Meccanian principles he had at any rate not been dictatorial. I wondered whether he really believed in his own plausible theories or whether he had been simply instructing the Foreign Observer.

When I saw Mr. Kwang a day or two afterwards —this time alone—he greeted me cordially and said, " So things are improving ? "

" They promise to do so," I said, " but so far, all that has happened has been a very tedious visit to Director Blobber and an academic discussion with Count Krafft."

" So you don't appreciate the honour of dining with an Under-Secretary of the Super-State ? " he said. " You have stayed too long in Luniland."

" I am promised the privilege of seeing something of the best Meccanian Society, but what I was more anxious to see was the worst Meccanian Society."

" They will take care you don't," he answered, laughing.

" But why ? In any other country one can associate with peasants or vagabonds or artisans or tradesmen or business men."

" You ought to know by this time—I am sure it has been explained to you over and over again. You would gather false impressions, and you might contaminate the delicate fruits of Meccanian Culture."

" That is the theory I have heard *ad nauseam*. But there is nothing in it."

" Why not ? "

"Because by keeping us apart they arouse the suspicions of both."

"Oh no, they may arouse *your* suspicions, but the Meccanian knows that what the State prescribes for him must be for his good. This is the only country where theories are carried into practice. It is a Super-State."

"And you admire it? You have become a proselyte," I said jokingly.

"Have you read my books yet?" he asked.

"I saw one for the first time this week," I said.

"Well?"

"I recognise it as a masterpiece."

He bowed and smiled. "From the President of the Kiang-su Literary Society that is high praise indeed."

"I am undecided whether to remain here longer," I said, "or to return home, perhaps calling for a rest and a change to see my friends in Lunopolis. I should like your advice."

"Of course that depends upon circumstances. I do not yet understand your difficulty or the circumstances."

"Well," I said, "I came here prepared to stay perhaps a year, if I liked the country, with the intention of obtaining general impressions, and some definite information on matters in which I am interested; but every Meccanian I have met is either a Government agent or a bore."

" What, even Madame Blobber ? " he interposed, smiling.

" Even Madame Blobber," I said. " I am getting tired of it. I try all sorts of means to gratify my perfectly innocent curiosity, and am baffled every time. Now I am promised a sight of high Society, but I expect they will show me what they want me to see and nothing they don't want me to see."

" Why should they show you what they don't want you to see ? " he laughed.

" I don't know how you stand it," I said.

" I have had the virtue of patience," he said, " and patience has been rewarded. I, too, am going home before long. I have got what I want."

He made the signal that bound me to absolute secrecy, and told me what his plans were. When I said that he ran a risk of being victimised he shook his head. " I am not afraid," he said. " By the time I reach home, every Meccanian agent in China will have been quietly deported. And they will not come back again. We are not a Super-State, but our country is not Idiotica."

" And in the meantime," I said, " suppose I stay here another month or so, what do you advise me to do ? "

" Oh, just amuse yourself as well as you can," he said.

" Amuse myself ! In Meccania ? "

" Yes ; it is not worth while trying now to do anything else. You will find out nothing new—

nothing that I have not already found out. It takes ten years to penetrate beneath the surface here, even with my methods," he said. "But I have got what I want."

"And how am I to amuse myself?"

"Accept all the invitations you get, keep your ears open and use your own considerable powers of reflection. By way of relief, come and talk to me whenever you want."

I followed Sz-ma-Kwang's advice: I gave up all thought of investigating either Meccanian Politics, or 'social problems,' or anything of the kind. I thought I should probably get better information at second hand from Mr. Kwang than I could get at first hand for myself, in the short time that I was prepared to stay, and I am satisfied now that I decided rightly. . . . I saw Lickrod almost daily, and went with him to a number of places, museums, the great library, industrial exhibitions, manufactories and so forth. We spent a day or two looking at examples of Meccanian architecture, which was more interesting from the engineering point of view than from the artistic. I began to receive invitations to several houses, chiefly of high officials in the Civil Service and one or two members of the higher bourgeoisie.

In the meantime I had some interesting conversation with my friends, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Villele, as we sat in the garden after dinner. I had never yet asked Mr. Johnson why he was pursuing what

I could not help thinking was the distasteful study of Meccanian Pedagogics, but as Lickrod had recommended me to talk to Mr. Johnson about Meccanian education the question came up naturally. I put it to him quite frankly.

"You are what I should describe as an Anti-Meccanian by temperament," I said, "and it seems very odd that you should be studying Meccanian Pedagogics of all things in the world."

"It is because I am an Anti-Meccanian, as you put it, that I am doing so," he replied. "You see in Luniland we never do things thoroughly—thank God!—and we have no pedagogical system. But every now and then a sort of movement arises in favour of some reform or other. For a long time Meccanian education was out of court; people would hear of nothing that savoured of Meccania, good or bad. Then there was a revival of interest, and societies were started to promote what they called Education on a scientific basis—by which they meant, not the study of science, but Meccanian education. As Professor of Education in one of our smaller Universities I was obliged to take some line or other, and the more I studied Meccanian Education from books, the less I liked it. So I came to equip myself with a better knowledge of the whole thing than the cranks who have taken it up."

"I suppose you find some things worth copying," I suggested, "in a field so wide, especially seeing that they have applied psychological science to methods of study ?"

"Oh yes, there are certain pedagogical tricks and dodges that are decidedly clever. In fact, if the human race were a race of clever insects, the Meccanian system of education would be almost perfect. The pupils store up knowledge as bees store honey, and they learn to perform their functions, as members of an organisation, with wonderful accuracy. I cannot help thinking sometimes that Meccania is a society of clever insects."

"Exactly," struck in Mr. Villele. "There are the soldier ants, and the slave ants, and the official ants, and the egg-producing ants. We ought to call Meccania the Super-Insect-State, eh ?"

"Yes; the land of the Super-Insects," said Johnson. "No person in Meccania, certainly no child, is ever looked upon as an 'end in itself'; he is simply one of a community of ants."

"Of course," I said, "to be quite fair, we cannot consider anybody strictly as an end in himself, even in Luniland."

"Theoretically that is so," replied Johnson, "but in practice it makes all the difference in the world whether you regard a man as an individual soul, or as a cell in an organism or a wheel in a machine."

"Why do you Lunilanders and Francarians, if I may ask such a large question, allow yourselves to be influenced at all by what is done in Meccania ?

There is so little intercourse between the countries that it hardly seems worth while having any at all," I said.

"Because in both countries there are still many people who regard the Meccanians not as Super-Insects, but as human beings," answered Johnson. "And there is always, too, the ultimate possibility of conflict. If they were on another planet it would not matter, providing they could invent no means of communicating with us. In itself Meccanian education is of little interest, except, of course, as education in the insect world might be interesting, or perhaps as a branch of pedagogical pathology or psychological pathology."

"In effect," interrupted Mr. Villele, "it all comes back to what Mr. Johnson was saying a few nights ago, that the key to the whole polity of Meccania is military power. Meccanian education is merely a means to that end, just as the Time Department, and every other institution—and the absence of certain other institutions like the Press, for example—is. The Super-State is the grand instrument of Militarism."

"Is it not possible," I said, "that the real key to the Super-State is the desire of the ruling classes to keep themselves in power?"

"But the two things go together," answered Villele. "The Meccanian maxim is that 'The State must be strong within in order to be strong without.'"

" And is not that true doctrine ? " I said, wondering how they would answer the argument.

" To a certain extent," answered Johnson cautiously. " But where are their enemies ? Why should they want all this ' Super-Strength ' ? "

" They say they are surrounded by unfriendly nations," I replied.

" So they are," answered Villele, " but they have done their best to make them unfriendly. If you knock a man down, and trample on him, and rob him into the bargain, you can hardly expect him to be a friendly neighbour next day."

" We started by talking about education," I remarked, " but we have very soon got into a discussion about Militarism—somehow we seem to get to that no matter what point we start from."

" And with very good reason," said Villele. " There used to be a saying that all roads lead to Rome. In Meccania all roads lead to Militarism. You who are not faced by the problem it presents may regard it as an obsession, but a man who refuses to admit the plainest evidence is also the victim of an obsession."

" And you think the evidence is unmistakable ? " I said.

" For what purpose does the Meccanian Parliament—if it can be called a Parliament—surrender its control over taxation ? For what purpose does the Government conceal its expenditure upon army and navy ? For what purpose does it destroy the freedom of the Press, and freedom of speech? For what purpose does the Government keep every person under supervision? For what purpose does it control all production?"

"I cannot answer these questions," I said; "but what evidence is there that the Meccanian system of education is designed as part of the scheme of Militarism?"

"The evidence is abundant," answered Johnson, "but it is not so plain as to be unmistakable. If you see one of our elaborate pieces of modern machinery, a printing-machine or a spinning-machine, you will find that it contains a thousand separate contrivances, and unless you are an expert you will not be able to perceive that every part is absolutely necessary to the performance of the simple function of printing or spinning. Yet that is the fact. It is just the same with the Meccanian educational machine. Its chief purpose, according to the Meccanian theory, is to enable the citizen—or, as Villele and I might say, the Super-Insect—to perform his functions as a member of the Super-Insect community. But the chief end of the Super-Insect State is Power. The Meccanians say so themselves. Anyhow, we can easily see for ourselves that their system of education fits in exactly with Militarism. It makes men efficient for the purposes required of them by the Super-State; it makes them not only docile and obedient, but actively devoted to the interests, not of themselves individually, but of what they are taught to regard as something more important, namely, the Super-State; it fosters the superstition which makes possible such an incredible custom as Villele has told you of; it keeps them ignorant of all other ideals of civilisation."

"All that may be true," I replied. "It may very well be that the system of education does favour Militarism, but it may not have been deliberately designed to that end. It has been put to me," I added, "that all this elaborate organisation, including education, is part of the inevitable tendency of things in the modern world, and that the Meccanians are only doing a little in advance of other people what they will all do sooner or later."

"That won't do at all," interposed Villele. "They cannot have it both ways. What becomes of the genius of Prince Mechow if it is all an inevitable tendency? They tell us other nations are not clever enough, or not far-seeing enough, or not strong-willed enough, to produce such a system. These reforms had to be introduced in the teeth of opposition. Other nations have not adopted them and will not adopt them except under the pressure of fear. It is Militarism alone that is strong enough to impose such a system."

"But," said I, "I find it difficult to believe that any civilisation, even Meccanian, can be really the result of the domination of a single idea. Not even the communities of the ancient world were so simple in their principles."

"That fact tells in favour of our contention," answered Villele.

"How so?" I said.

"Why, you admit the natural tendency of all civilised peoples towards diversity of aims. The more highly developed, the more diversified. If, therefore, you find a people becoming less diversified, subordinating all individual wills to the will of the State, you must suspect some extraordinary force. You would not deny the fact that individual liberty has been suppressed?"

"No," I said, "I do not deny that."

"But you think the Super-State has such an interest in the tender plant of the individual souls of its children, their moral and spiritual and physical life, that it is merely a meticulous grandmother trying to prepare them all for a better world, eh?"

I laughed.

"No, that won't do. Only two things are strong enough to suppress the spirit of liberty: one is superstition calling itself religion; the other is Militarism."

"If it were less well done," resumed Johnson, "it would be easier to detect. But it is diabolically well done. Who but the Meccanians would think it worth while to control the whole teaching of history for the sake of cultivating Militarism? In most countries anybody may write history, although very few people read it. Here only the official historians may write: only the books prescribed by the State may be read. And all the people while they are at school and college must read it. In this way they create a powerful tradition. One need not laugh at the idea of State historians. They have done their work too well for that. Their falsification of history is not a clumsy affair of inventing fairy tales. It is scientific falsification. They utilise every fact that can tell against, or discredit, other nations, and every fact about their own people which can raise their national self-esteem. The method is not new, for you may say that all historians are biased. But in other countries the bias of one historian is counterbalanced by the bias of others. The *method* is not new but the *system* is. As an example, take their treatment of a well-known Luniland statesman of the beginning of the last century—and this is a fairly harmless instance. He was undoubtedly a single-minded, public-spirited man, a patriot who was also a good European, for he did as much as any one man to save Europe from a military tyranny. But he shared many of the current ideas of his age and lived according to its customs. In *Meccanian* history all we are told of him is that he drank heavily, gambled, persecuted ignorant and misguided labourers, bribed the people's representatives, enriched capitalists and landlords by his fiscal system, and displayed his ignorance of finance by inventing a fallacious Sinking Fund that any schoolboy could see through."

"Mr. Johnson is putting the case much too mildly," interposed Villele. "There are in the 'reports' issued by the Government on all sorts of matters, but particularly with regard to foreign affairs, falsifications of fact of the most barefaced character. Now the writers of the school and college histories quote very extensively from these official reports, implying always that the statements are true. Further than this, you know, but not perhaps as well as we do, that in countries where speech is free and the Press is free there are any number of libellous writers who vilify their opponents in a shameless fashion. In Luniland in particular, if my friend will pardon my saying so, there are enthusiasts for some particular cause who have no sense whatever of proportion. For instance, to hear some of the so-called Temperance advocates you would imagine that the Lunilanders were a nation of drunkards, wife-beaters, seducers, abandoned wretches of every kind. To listen to their Socialist fanatics you would imagine that every working man was a down-trodden slave. To listen to their anti-vivisectionists you would imagine that the whole medical profession spent its leisure in the sport of torturing animals. To listen to some of the priests you would think the whole nation was sunk in vice.

To listen to the anti-priests you would think the priests were a tribe of grasping hypocrites, and so on and so on. Now you will find Meccanian histories, and works on the social and political life of foreign nations, full of quotations from such writers."

"As I said at the outset," remarked Johnson, "this may seem a little thing in itself, but it is symptomatic and characteristic. Look at an entirely different aspect of the system. The whole teaching profession is honeycombed with sycophancy. Every teacher is a spy upon every other. Every one tries to show his zeal, and gain some promotion, by a display of the Meccanian spirit. As you know, there are no private schools. There is not a single independent teacher in the whole country. It is in the Universities even more than in the schools that sycophancy runs riot."

"That may be perfectly true," I said, "but would you not get this disease of sycophancy wherever you have a bureaucracy, quite apart from Militarism? Suppose there were no army at all, but suppose that the State were the sole employer and controller of every person and thing, you might still have all the petty tyranny and sycophancy that you describe."

"But there is a difference," said Johnson. "Under a mere bureaucracy it is still possible for the large groups of workers to combine, and very effectually, to safeguard their interests; especially if at the same time there is a real parliamentary system. Indeed, many years ago one of the strongest arguments brought forward in Luniland against any large extension of State employment was that the employees, through their trade combinations, would be able to exert political pressure, and rather exploit the State than be exploited by it. No, I maintain that a military autocracy without a bureaucracy may be brutal and tyrannical, in a spasmodic sort of way; but it is loose-jointed and clumsy: a bureaucracy apart from a military control of the State may be meddlesome and irritating; but it is only when you get the two combined that the people are bound hand and foot. Anyhow, I cannot conceive of the whole teaching profession, including the highest as well as the lowest branches, being so completely enslaved as it is here, without there being a driving power at the back of the bureaucratic machine, such as only Militarism can supply in our times—for religion is out of the question."

"Well, now, is there any other sort of evidence," I said, "that the educational system is inspired by Militarism? So far the case is 'not proven.'"

"The cultivation of 'the Meccanian spirit,' which is one of the prime aims of all the teaching, points at any rate in the same direction."

"But the Meccanian spirit is only another name for patriotism, is it not?" I said.

"Your scepticism," remarked Villele, "would almost make one suppose you were becoming a convert to Meccanianism."

"Not at all," I said. "I have tried to get first-hand information on these matters and I have failed. Here I am, listening to you who are avowedly, if I may say so in your presence, anti-Meccanians." They both nodded assent. "Would it not be foolish of me to accept your views without at any rate sifting the evidence as fully as I am able? It has this advantage, I shall be much more likely to become convinced of the correctness of your opinions if I find that you meet the hypothetical objections I raise than if I merely listen to your views."

"The Meccanian spirit is another name for patriotism," said Johnson; "but it is Meccanian patriotism. Patriotism is not a substitute for Ethics in the rest of Europe, nor was it in Meccania two centuries ago. Absolute obedience to the State is definitely inculcated here. No form of resistance is possible. Resistance is never dreamt of; the Meccanian spirit implies active co-operation with the Super-State, not passive obedience only but reverence and devotion. And remember that the Super-State when you probe under the surface *is the Second Class, the Military Caste.*"

"But do not all States inculcate obedience to themselves?" I said.

"No," replied Johnson bluntly. "They may inculcate obedience to the laws for the time being;

it is only Churches claiming Divine inspiration that arrogate to themselves infallibility, and demand unconditional obedience. In the rest of Europe the State is one of the organs—a most necessary and important organ—of the community: here, the State or the Super-State is the Divinity in which society lives and moves and has its being. It is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent."

"Admitting all you say about the deliberate policy of the Super-State," I answered, "is it not strange that a hundred millions of people submit themselves to it, and that even outside Meccania there are many advocates of Meccanian principles?"

"Tyrannies have flourished in the world in every age," replied Johnson, "because there is something even worse than Tyranny. To escape a plague a man will take refuge in a prison. Anarchy, such as that which broke out in Idiotica some fifty years ago, was a godsend to the rulers of Meccania. They persuaded the public that there was a choice only between the Super-State and Anarchy or Bolshevism as it was then called. We know that is false. Liberty may be attacked by an open enemy or by a secret and loathsome disease; but that is no reason for surrendering either to the one or the other."

Italy ?
or Russia ?

CHAPTER XI

AN ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

IT was some days after this conversation with my friends at the hotel that I was present at a dinner-party given by the President of Mecco University. There were about thirty guests, so that at table a general conversation was almost impossible; I could hear only what was said by those close to me. I was seated between a member of the diplomatic corps and a general. General Wolf, a benevolent-looking old gentleman with a large, coarse face and a double chin, seemed rather disappointed that I could not discuss with him the Higher Mathematics. He deplored the neglect of Mathematics in Meccania. He admitted that unless a person had a mathematical brain it was useless to attempt to make him a mathematician; but he said the Eugenics section of the Health Department was not sufficiently alive to the importance of improving the mathematical stock. He railed very bitterly against a member of the Eugenics Board who had tried to get authority to improve the supply of artists. Happily the Board had turned down his proposals. Count Hardflogg, who wore the Mechow whisker and an eyeglass, and frowned fiercely at everything one said to him, was full of a recent report by the experts in the Industrial Psychology section of the Department of Industry and Commerce. It seems they had recommended a shortening of hours for the members of the Sixth and Fifth Classes in a number of provincial towns, to bring them more on a level with the same class of workers in Mecco itself. He said it was the thin end of the wedge ; that they ought not to have reported until experiments had been made with a different diet : he blamed the Eugenics Section, too, for not being able to produce a tougher strain of workers. Reduction of working hours should not be resorted to, he maintained, until every other expedient had been tried : it was so very difficult to increase them afterwards. Besides, in the Strenuous Month, it had been proved over and over again that the men could easily stand a longer working day without physical injury.

" And what is the Strenuous Month ? " I asked.

" Oh, of course," he said, " you have not studied our industrial system as a factor of military organisation. There is a very good account of it in Mr. Kwang's *Triumphs of Meccanian Culture.* Briefly it is this. Every year, but not always in the same month, the signal is given for the Strenuous Month to begin. The workmen then work at top speed, and for as many hours a day as the Industrial Psychologists determine, for thirty days consecutively. It is excellent training, and incidentally has a very good effect on the output for the other months of the year. The men are so glad when it is over that, unconsciously, they work better for the rest of the year."

"But I should have thought they would be so fatigued that you would lose as much as you gain, or more perhaps," I said.

"Oh no," he answered; "they are allowed one day's complete rest, which they must spend in bed; their diet is arranged, both during the time and for a month after. They must go to bed for two hours extra every night for the following month. The effect is most beneficial. They like it too, on the whole, for they get paid for all the extra product—that is to say, it is added to their pension fund."

"But I thought the pension fund was so calculated," I said, "that it tallies exactly with what is required for the support of each man from the time he ceases to be able to work."

"Certainly," he replied. "After fifty-five most of our men work an hour a day less every two years, with variations according to their capacity, as tested by the medical examinations."

"Then how do they benefit," I asked, "by the product of the strenuous month, if it is only added to their pension and not paid at the time?"

"If it is added to the pension fund," he replied, "it is obvious that they must benefit."

I did not pursue the matter further. He asked me if I had been to the Annual Medical Exhibition. I said I had not heard of it, and did not suppose I should receive permission to see it, as I was not altogether well qualified to understand it. He said it was most interesting. He was not a medical man himself, of course; but as an officer in the army he had had to get some acquaintance with physiology.

"The medical menagerie gets more interesting every year," he said.

"The medical menagerie!" I exclaimed. "Whatever is that?"

"It is a wonderful collection of animals, not only domestic but wild animals too, upon which experiments have been carried out. There are goats with sheep's legs. There are cows with horses' hearts, and dogs with only hind-legs, and pigs without livers—oh, all sorts of things. The funniest is a pig with a tiger's skin."

"And what is the object of it all?" I said.

"Oh, just a regular part of medical research. The most valuable experiments are those with bacilli, of course; but only the experts can understand these, as a rule."

"But it is not safe to infer that the results of experiments on animals will be applicable to human beings," I said.

"Of course not, without further verification; but the Special Medical Board have ample powers to carry out research."

" What, upon human beings ? " I exclaimed.

" People do not always know when they are being experimented upon," he remarked significantly. " Besides, if a man is already suffering from an incurable disease, what does it matter ? Of course, we use anæsthetics, wherever possible at least ; that goes without saying."

After dinner we drank wine for a little time, seated in little groups after the manner of a custom in some of the colleges in Luniland. Here, instead of being placed with the two gentlemen who had been my neighbours at table, I was one of a group of four, the others being two professors and a high official in the Sociological Department. One of the professors was Secret Councillor Sikofantis-Sauer, an Economist ; the other was Church Councillor Muhgubb-Slimey, a Theologian. We talked of indifferent matters for some time until the High Official left us, when the idea occurred to me to try whether the Economist would enlighten me upon the subject of the ultimate destination of the phenomenal production of the Meccanian economic organisation.

I remarked that I had never seen in any country so few signs of discontent as in Meccania, and I asked if this was due to the great wealth that must necessarily be produced by the efficiency of the methods of production. Professor Sikofantis-Sauer, the Economist, said that my question betrayed that I was not acquainted with the Meccanian System of Ethics. I wondered why the Professor of Economics should begin talking of Ethics. He went on, " Social discontent was never really due to lack of wealth. Properly speaking, it has no relation to material wealth at all. This has been proved up to the hilt—if it needed any proof—by our researches in Economic and Social History. In a nutshell the proof is this. What was called poverty in the early nineteenth century would have been considered affluence in, let us say, the fifth or even the tenth century. The whole idea of wealth is subjective. Now anyone knows that, where wealth is allowed to become the main objective of the social activities of the people, the desire for individual wealth is insatiable. The notion that you can ever reach a state of contentment, by increasing the wealth of the people, is one of the greatest fallacies that even the economists of Luniland ever entertained—and that is saying a good deal. Consequently, if we have succeeded in eradicating discontent, it has not been by pursuing the mirage of a popular El Dorado. No, you must replace the insane desire for the gratification of individual indulgence by a conception of a truer kind of well-being. If the individual once grasps the fact that in himself, and by himself, he is little better than an arboreal ape, and that all he possesses, all he can possess, is the gift of the State—which gives him nourishment, language, ideas, knowledge; which trains him to use his powers, such as they are—he will assume an entirely different attitude. Our system of education, far more than our system of production, is responsible for the eradication of social and of every other kind of discontent."

"Then I suppose," I said, "the lower classes, as we sometimes call them abroad—your Fifth and Sixth and Seventh Classes, for example—never inquire whether they receive what they consider a fair share of the national product?"

Professor Sauer laughed aloud. "Pardon me," he said, "but you remind me of a story I used to hear when I was a boy, of a man who had slept in some cave or den for fifty years, or was it a century, and woke up to find a different world. Such a question belongs to the buried fossils of economic theory. Who can say what is a fair share? You might as well ask whether one musical composition is more just than another."

"Well, perhaps you can tell me this," I said. "Considering the superiority of your methods of production, I should have expected to find a much higher standard of individual wealth, or comfort, or leisure—you know what I mean—among not only the lower classes, but all classes. I cannot help wondering what becomes of all the surplus."

"We have all enough for our needs," he said, "and the requirements of the State are of far more importance than the gratification of the tastes of individuals."

"May I put in a word?" said Professor Slimey the Theologian. "In the modern world, the productive powers of man have outstripped his other powers. It is one of the mysteries of the ways of Providence. The discipline of labour is necessary for the development of the soul, but the devil has sought to seduce mankind by teaching him how to produce more than is good for him, in the hope that he will become corrupted by luxury. In other countries that corruption has already taken place. The strenuous life is the only life consistent with moral health. Under the Divine guidance our ruling classes—I am old-fashioned enough to use that expression, for in the eyes of God there are no First or Second Classes—have preserved the sense of duty; they are a discipline unto themselves. God's blessings have been multiplied unto them, and they have not forgotten the Divine injunctions. We cannot expect that the masses of mankind can discipline themselves, and for them the only safety lies in well-regulated and well-directed labour. There can be no greater curse for a people than idleness and luxury. Fortunately, we have been able to preserve them from the evil effects of superabundant wealth."

"I have sometimes wondered," I said, "whether the requirements of the State in regard to what is called National Defence were so great as to account for the surplus product."

"Undoubtedly the demands of the army are very considerable," replied Sauer. "You must remember that we have to protect ourselves against the whole world, so to speak."

"But no estimate has been made, I suppose, of what is required for such things?" I said.

"That is a matter of high policy," replied Sauer. "It would be impossible to estimate for it as a separate item in National expenditure. There again you betray your Lunilandish conceptions of National finance. No doubt they keep up this practice still in Luniland, but such a notion belongs to a bygone age. The State must be able to mobilise all its resources; that is the only logical policy, if you mean to conduct the affairs of the nation successfully, not only in time of war but in time of peace. Your asking how much National wealth is devoted to Defence is like asking a man how much of his dinner is devoted to sustaining his religion."

"But is it not important to be able to form some approximate idea, from the economic point of view?" I said. "For, in one sense, it represents so much waste."

"So much waste?" exclaimed Professor Slimey indignantly; "to what nobler purpose could the energies of the people be directed than to the defence of their Emperor, their God and their Fatherland?"

"I did not mean that it might not be necessary," I replied, "but it is like a man who has to build a dyke against floods. It may be necessary, but if he could be sure that the floods would not come, he could devote his energies to something more profitable."

Professor Slimey shook his head solemnly. "No, no," he said, "that is another of the fallacies current among foreign peoples. We should sink to their level if our people had not ever before them the duty of serving God by upholding the power of Meccania, his chosen nation. Indeed, I often think what a dispensation of Providence it is that it involves so much labour. Imagine the state of the common people if they could maintain themselves by the aid of a few hours' work a day!"

"Would there not be so much more scope for the spread of your Culture?" I said. "In fact, I had been given to understand that your Culture had reached such a high level that you could easily dispense with the discipline of long hours of labour."

"Our Culture," he replied, speaking with authority, "is not an individual culture at all. It must be understood as a unity. It includes this very discipline of which you seem to think so lightly. It includes the discipline of all classes. The monks of the Middle Ages knew that idleness would undermine even their ideal of life, for they knew that life is a discipline. Our National Culture is the nearest approach to the Christian ideal that any nation has ever put into practice."

"I cannot, of course, speak with confidence upon such a question," I replied, "but I thought the

Christian ideal was the development of the individual soul, whereas the Meccanian ideal—I speak under correction—implies the elimination of the individual soul: everything must be sacrificed to the realisation of the glory of the Super-State."

"The Super-State," answered Slimey, "is itself the Great Soul of Meccania; it includes all the individual souls. What you call the sacrifice of the individual soul is no real sacrifice; it is merely a losing oneself to find oneself in the larger soul of Meccania. And just as the individual soul may inflict suffering on itself for the sake of higher self-realisation, so the Super-Soul of Meccania may inflict suffering on the individual souls within itself for the sake of the higher self-realisation. The soul of Meccania is as wonderful in the spiritual world as the material manifestation of Meccania is in the material world."

"I am sure you are right," I said, "although it never struck me in that light before. The soul of Meccania is the most wonderful phenomenon in the history of the world."

"No," replied Professor Slimey, with his solemn air, "it is not phenomenon: it is the thing in itself." Here he paused to drink a liqueur. Then he went on, "It is purely spiritual. It has existed from eternity and has become clothed and manifest through the outward and inward development of the Super-State. You foreigners see only the outward forms, which are merely symbols. It is the Super-Soul of Meccania that is destined to absorb the world of spirit, as the Super-State is destined to conquer the material world."

Professor Sikofantis-Sauer gazed with his fishy eyes, as if he had heard all this before. "Some day," I said, "I should like to hear more of the Super-Soul, but while I have the privilege of talking to both of you I should like to learn some things which probably only a Professor of Economics can tell me. You, as Meccanians, will pardon me, I know, for seeking to acquire knowledge." They nodded assent. "I know something of the economic ideas of other nations in Europe," I said, "but your conditions are so different that I am quite at sea with regard to the economic doctrines of Meccania. What Economic Laws are there within the Super-State?"

"A very profound question," answered Sauer, "and yet the answer is simple. What you have studied in other countries is merely the economics of free exchange, as carried on among peoples of a low culture. Our Economics have hardly anything in common. Some of the laws of large-scale production are similar, but beyond that, our science rests upon other principles. Our science is based upon Meccanian Ethics. The laws of demand have quite a different meaning with us. The State determines the whole character and volume of demand, and entirely upon ethical grounds."

"And distribution too, I suppose?"

"Naturally. That is implied in the regulation of demand. The State determines what each class may spend, and in so doing determines both demand and distribution."

"But I was under the impression that the well-to-do—the Third and higher classes generally—had much more latitude than the lower classes in these respects," I said.

"Quite so. That again is part of our national ethical system. Just as our Economics are National Economics, so our Ethics are National Ethics. The higher functions discharged by the higher classes demand a higher degree and quality of consumption. You will find some most interesting researches upon this subject in the reports of the Sociological Department. Dr. Greasey's monograph on the *Sociological Function of the Third Class* is also a masterpiece in its way."

"And the Second Class?" I said. "They will require still more latitude?"

"The Second Class, like the First," replied Sauer, "stands outside and above the purely Economic aspect of Society. Their function is to determine what the National-Social Structure shall be. Our business as economists is to provide ways and means. No doubt they are unconsciously guided, or shall I say inspired, by the workings of the Meccanian spirit, of which they are the highest depositaries; and all the organs of the State are at their service, to give effect to their interpretation of the will of the Super-State."

" You do not find any tendency on their part, I suppose, to make large demands for themselves in the shape of what we non-Meccanians persist in calling ' wealth ' ? " I said.

" Such a question," answered Sauer, " does not admit of any answer, because it involves a conception of wealth which we have entirely discarded. The Second Class—and with them, of course, I include the First Class, for they are indivisible in their functions and spirit—exists for the Super-State. Whatever they consume is consumed in the discharge of the highest duties of the State. Whatever is required by them is simply part of the necessary expenditure of the State. But although no limit is set—and who would presume to set any limit ?—it is remarkable how little of this expenditure assumes the form of personal consumption. For the sake of the dignity of the State, their life must be conducted—collectively—on a magnificent scale. But, as you know, a dignitary like the Pope may live in the finest palace in Europe and yet be a man of simple tastes and habits ; so our noble class—and no nobler class has ever existed—may represent the glory of the Super-State and yet be the embodiment of the purest virtues."

" I would go further," said Professor Slimey at this point. " Our noble Second Class—and of course I associate the First Class with them, for in reality they are all one—are the true Protectors of the State: they are the guardians of us all. Have you not noticed throughout all history that, after a successful war, the people are ready to bestow all manner of honours and benefits upon those who have saved their country? Well, I say those who have given us all the glory and honour, ay, and the spoils of victory too, without going to war, are as deserving of the rewards as if they had come back from a long campaign. We cannot honour them too much. Besides, it is good for the people to feel that there is a class upon whom they can bestow the natural warmth of their affection and their admiration. The desire to bow down in reverent admiration, the desire to do honour to the worthiest of our race, is a God-given impulse, and should be encouraged, not checked. Our people feel this. We do not bargain with them as to what share they shall have: we do not lay aside a tenth, or some such absurd proportion: we say, take our wealth, take whatever we can give, it is all yours, you are the fathers of the State, you are our saviours."

"And you think this spirit prevails throughout Meccania?" I said.

"I am perfectly sure of it," replied Slimey. "All our greatest artists offer their works freely to the members of the Second Class; all the most gifted scientists compete for places in the colleges for the training of the Military; the services of our best writers are at their disposal: we withhold nothing from them."

"Then it is true, I gather, that the custom I have heard of, by which wives and daughters of other classes, if they are thought worthy by the Eugenics Board, are—shall I say—dedicated to the service of the Second Class, arouses no feeling of indignation?"

"Indignation!" exclaimed the Professor of Theology. "It is a duty and a privilege."

"But is it not contrary to the principles of the Christian religion? I confess I speak with some hesitation, as I do not belong to the Christian communion; but I have been told by some of the strictest of the Christian sects in other countries that such a practice is a violation of the Christian code."

Professor Slimey refreshed himself, and I could see another long speech was coming. "That is a sample of the uncharitable criticism which is constantly being aimed at us, by those who cloak their envy and spite under the name of Christian doctrine. Yet they are utterly inconsistent with themselves. They admit the Doctrine of Development, yet they deny its application, except to suit their own purposes. Take Usury, for example. Christian doctrine, as expounded by the Fathers, regarded usury as sinful. Yet usury is practised in all so-called Christian countries without protest. Why? Because their system of Economics cannot work without it. I might give other illustrations, but that will suffice. Now Ethics must undergo development if there is to be progress in morals. The supreme well-being of the State gives the key to all progress in Ethics. If the custom you refer to were due to private concupiscence, we—and I speak for all Meccanian theologians—would be the first to denounce it. The sin of adultery is a spiritual sin, and exists only where carnal desire is the motive. Every theologian knows that the same physical act may be performed in conformity with the behests of the Mosaic law, or in direct disobedience of it. The one is a sacred duty, the other is sin. It is like the alleged obligation to speak the truth upon all occasions. There is no such obligation. We must look to the end in view. Where the supreme needs of the State demand concealment or even deception, the private ethical impulse to speak the truth to an enemy is superseded by the greater obligation to the State. The virtue of Chastity is not violated; it is raised, if I may say so, to its transcendent degree, by an act of sacrifice which implies the surrender of merely private virtue to the interests of the State; for you must remember that the State as developed by the Meccanian spirit is the highest embodiment of the will of God upon earth."

"We seem to have been carried rather a long way from Meccanian Economics," I remarked, turning to Professor Sauer by way of apology for having carried on the conversation for so long with Professor Slimey.

"Not at all," he answered. "Meccanian Ethics and Meccanian Economics cannot be separated."

"It must make the science of Economics much more difficult in one sense; but, on the other hand, what a relief it must be to have got rid of all those old troublesome theories of value!" I observed.

"We have not got rid of theories of value," answered Sauer; "they too have only been developed. The basis of our theory of value is to be found in Meccanian Ethics."

"In other words," I said, laughing, "the value of a pair of boots in Meccania is determined by the theologians!"

"How do you mean?" asked Sauer.

"I mean that the remuneration of an artisan in the Fifth Class will purchase so many pairs of boots; and the remuneration of the artisan is determined by what the State thinks good for him; and what the State thinks good for him is determined by Meccanian Ethics; and I suppose the theologians determine the system of Meccanian Ethics."

At that point our conversation was interrupted by an announcement that the toast of the evening would be drunk. This was the signal for the party to break up. We drank to the success of the Meccanian Empire and the confounding of all its enemies, and I went home to the hotel to find a message from Kwang asking me to see him the following day. I spent the morning as usual with Lickrod, who was initiating me into the method of using the catalogues in the Great Library of Mecco. It was indeed a marvel of 'librarianship.' There was a bibliography upon every conceivable subject. There was a complete catalogue of every book according to author, and another according to subject. There was a complete catalogue of the books issued in each separate year for the last twenty-five years. There were courses of study with brief notes upon all the books. Lickrod was in his element. As we came away, about lunch-time, I said to him, "Suppose I want to take back with me, when I leave the country, a dozen books to read for pure pleasure, what would you recommend me to take?"

"Upon what subject?" he asked.

"Upon anything, no matter what. What I am thinking of are books which are just works of art in themselves, pieces of pure literature either in poetry or prose."

"A book must be about something," he said; "it must fall into some category or other."

"Is there no imaginative literature?" I asked.

"Oh, certainly, we have scores of treatises on the imagination."

"But I mean books that are the work of the imagination."

"I see. You want them for your children, perhaps: they would be found in the juvenile departments; fables and parables, and that sort of thing."

"No, I mean books without any serious purpose, but for grown-up people. I seem to remember such works in the old Meccanian literature."

"How very odd," answered Lickrod, "that you should express a wish to see works of that kind."

"Why?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Because we find works of that kind in great demand in the asylums for the mentally afflicted. You see, we treat the inmates as humanely as possible, and our pathologists tell us that they cannot read the books by modern authors. We have to let them read for a few hours a day, and they beg, really rather piteously, for the old books. It is always old books they ask for. I suppose in a way they are cases of a kind of arrested development. At any rate, they have not been able to keep pace with the developments of our ideas. Doctor Barm reported only last year that the only books that seem to have a soothing effect on these patients are those written, oh, two hundred years ago, and of the very kind you probably have in mind."

CHAPTER XII

THE LATEST INSTITUTION

I WENT to see Kwang in the afternoon, and found him in a state of suppressed excitement—at least I could not help having that impression. After a little time, when I had given him some brief account of my experience at the dinner-party, he said, " I told you the other day that I had some thoughts of returning home. I shall be off in a fortnight."

" This is rather sudden," I said; " have you received bad news from home ? "

" No," he said; " I told you I had practically completed my work. The fact is, that things are beginning to develop rather fast here. I see signs of preparation for a ' forward move.' "

" Oh ! " I said. " Not another war ? "

" Not necessarily," he replied. " Light your cigar and I will tell you all you need know." I did so and waited.

" The next war," he said, " will be a chemical war."

" A chemical war ? What on earth is that ? " I said.

" They have been experimenting for thirty years and more, and they think they have discovered what they want. It may take them several years to perfect their arrangements; it will certainly take them a year or two, and may take six or seven. But one never knows. I suppose you never heard of the three days' war, did you ? "

" No," I replied; " what was it ? "

" The State of Lugrabia, with which the Meccanians are in permanent alliance, refused to ratify a new treaty that seemed unfavourable to them in some respects, and feeling ran so high that there was some talk in Lugrabia of putting an end to the alliance. Without any declaration of war the Meccanian Government dispatched a small fleet of air-vessels, planted about a dozen chemical ' Distributors,' as they are euphemistically called, and warned the Lugrabian State that, unless their terms were complied with, the twelve chief cities would be wiped out. The war was over in three days. And to this day the outside world has never heard of the event."

" How can it have been kept secret ? " I said.

" Ask rather how could it leak out," replied Kwang.

" Anyhow," he went on, " they think they have got something that will enable them to defeat any combination. There is no question in dispute with any foreign power. The political ' horizon ' is perfectly clear. But it is time for me to go home."

"Do you think this idea of theirs is really dangerous?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly."

"But can it not be counteracted in any way?"

"If it can't it will be a bad look out for the rest of us," he said.

"But do you see any means of meeting it?"

"There is, if I can get the Governments to act. But they are at a tremendous disadvantage."

"Why?" I said.

"Because everything they do will be proclaimed from the housetops. However, what I wanted to do immediately was to arrange with you about leaving the country. Of course you will stay as long as you like, but I should advise you not to stay too long. I shall not announce that I am going away permanently, and I shall leave nearly all my things here to avoid suspicion; but within three months they will know that I am not likely to come back, and then they may want to look *you* up if you are still here."

"I shall go as soon as you think it is advisable for me to go," I said. "The only thing I wanted to make sure of was the thing you have apparently found out. Once or twice since I came I have felt sceptical about the Machiavellian designs attributed to the Meccanian Government by all these neighbours. Naturally they see a robber in every bush.

I have sometimes been inclined to think the Meccanians like organising just for the love of it, but you are satisfied that there is more in it than that."

"My dear child," said Kwang, "there are some people who can't see a stone wall till they knock their heads against it, and who can't tell that a mad bull is dangerous till he tosses them in the air; and from what I learn you are almost as bad," he said, laughing. "You have been here, how long? Four or five months at any rate. Well, you have a very unsuspicious mind. But I am going to give you an interesting experience. I am going to take you to see a friend of mine who has been a prisoner in an asylum for the mentally afflicted for the last fifteen years. I enjoy the privilege of talking to him alone, and I have permission to take you. I won't stop to explain how I obtained the privilege, but it has been very useful."

In another quarter of an hour we were rolling along in Kwang's motor-car to a place about forty miles outside Mecco. The roads were as smooth as glass and the car made no noise, so we could converse without raising our voices. Kwang observed that if I wished to stay in Meccania there was only one way of getting behind the screen, and that was to become a convert. The rôle of a convert, however, was becoming more difficult to play. He had lately begun to suspect that he was being watched, or at any rate that one or two people at the Foreign Office were jealous of his privileges. Some years ago, the Head of the Foreign Office had given him practically the free run of the country, and had utilised him as a sort of missionary of Meccania. His books on the *Triumphs of Meccanian Culture* and on *Meccania's World Mission* had been given the widest possible publicity, both in Meccania and abroad. He still enjoyed all his privileges, for Count Krafft was a powerful friend at the Foreign Office. Consequently the Police Department had orders not to interfere with him, and he had free passes for almost everything. But another Under-Secretary had lately begun to question the wisdom of his colleague, not openly but secretly, and was trying to get hold of evidence.

" They lie so wonderfully and so systematically themselves," said Kwang, " that they naturally suspect everybody else of lying too. But this suspicion very often defeats its own object. Still, they can't expect to have a monopoly of lying. I have seen official pamphlets for circulation in the departments, on the methods of testing the *bona fides* of foreigners; and elaborate rules for finding out whether foreign Governments are trying to deceive them."

" And you have satisfied all their tests ? " I said.

" Absolutely," replied Kwang, with a smile; " but I am not yet out of the country, and I don't propose to risk it much longer, or I may not be able to get out. However," he added, " there is not the slightest risk in taking you to visit the Asylum for

Znednettlapseiwz. I have made a special study of these asylums, of which there are only about half a dozen in the whole country. I got permission some years ago. I had been discussing with Count Krafft the difficulty of dealing with a certain class of persons, to be found in every modern State, who act as a focus for all opposition. They cling obstinately to certain ethical and political doctrines quite out of harmony with those of the Super-State, and profess to regard Bureaucracy and Militarism as inconsistent with liberty. He told me a good deal about the methods employed, and suggested that I should visit one of these asylums. I did so and asked permission to make a study of a few individual cases. Eventually I wrote a monograph on the case of the very man we are going to see, and although it was never published Count Krafft was much pleased with it. The man we shall see, Mr. Stillman, represents a type that has almost entirely disappeared from Meccania. He has had a remarkable history. At one time, for two or three years, he was the chief political opponent of the great Prince Mechow. He belongs to an older generation altogether, a generation older than his contemporaries, if you understand what I mean. Nearly all his contemporaries are 'Good Meccanians,' but there are still the remnants of the opposition left. When Stillman was a boy there were left alive only a handful of men who had stood up to Prince Bludiron. Most of these former opponents had emigrated, some to Transatlantica, some to Luniland and elsewhere. The rest ultimately died out. Stillman attempted to create a new opposition, but it was a hopeless task. If you want to understand the political history of Meccania you cannot do better than get him to talk to you if he is in the mood."

We approached the asylum, which stood upon a lonely moorland, far away from any village. The gates were guarded by a single sentinel. As we walked along the path, after leaving our car in a yard near the lodge, we passed little groups of men working upon patches of garden. They looked up eagerly as we passed, and then turned back to their tasks. I noticed they were dressed in ordinary black clothes. It struck me at once, because I had become so used to seeing everybody in the familiar colours of one of the classes. On my mentioning this to Kwang, he said, "That is perfectly in accordance with the Meccanian system. These men now belong to no class; they are shut off from the rest of the world, and their only chance of returning to it is for them to renounce, formally and absolutely, all the errors of which they have been guilty."

"And do many of them 'recant'?" I asked.

"Very few. Most of them do not want to return to the ordinary life of Meccania, but occasionally the desire to be with some member of their family proves too strong for them. They are nearly all old people here now. None of the younger generation are attacked by the disease, and the authorities hope"—he smiled sardonically—"that in a few years the disease will have disappeared entirely."

We first went to call upon Hospital-Governor Canting. He was in his office, which was comfortably furnished in very characteristic Meccanian taste. The chairs were all adjustable, and covered with 'Art' tapestry. The large table had huge legs like swollen pillars—they were really made of thin cast-iron. There were the usual large portraits of the Emperor and Empress, and busts of Prince Mechow and Prince Bludiron. There was the usual large bookcase, full of volumes of reports bound in leather-substitute, and stamped with the arms of Meccania. Governor Canting wore the green uniform of the Fourth Class, with various silver facings and buttons, and a collar of the special kind worn by all the clergy of the Meccanian Church. He was writing at his table when we were shown in. He greeted Kwang almost effusively and bowed to me, with the usual Meccanian attitudes, as I was introduced.

"So you have brought your friend to see our system of treatment," he said, smiling. "It is very unusual for us to receive visits at all,"—here he turned to me,—"but Mr. Kwang is quite a privileged person in Meccania. If only there were more people like Mr. Kwang we should not be so much misunderstood, and the victims of so much envy, malice and uncharitableness. Still, it is a sad experience for you."

"Do many of the patients suffer acutely?" I asked, hardly knowing what was the right cue.

"Oh, I did not mean that. No, no, *they* don't suffer much. But it is sad to think that men who might have been worthy citizens, some of them as writers, some as teachers, some even as doctors—men who might have served the State in a hundred ways—are wasting their talents and hindering the spread of our Culture."

"It must be a terrible affliction," I said. "Do they not sometimes feel it themselves in their moments of clearness of mind?"

He looked at me, a little in doubt as to my meaning, but my face must have reassured him. "The strange thing about this disease," he said, "is that the patients suffer no pain directly from it; and you must remember that in practically all cases—just as in alcoholism—it is self-induced. There may be some little hereditary tendency, but the disease itself is certainly not inherited, and can be counteracted in its early stages by prophylactic treatment, as we have now fully demonstrated. As I say, it is self-induced, and it is therefore very difficult, even for a Christian minister who realises his duties to the State as well as to the Church, always to feel charitably towards these patients. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact of moral responsibility, and when I think of the obstinacy of these men I am tempted to lose patience. And their conceit! To presume that they—a few hundreds of them at most—know better than all the wise and loyal statesmen of Meccania, better than all the experts, better than all the millions of loyal citizens. But it is when I see what a poor miserable handful of men they are after all that I can find in my heart to pity them."

"And how is my special case?" asked Kwang, when he could get a word in.

"Just the same," said Canting—"just the same. You will find him perhaps a little weaker. I will not go with you. You seem to succeed best with him by yourself; and no doubt you have instructed your friend as to the peculiar nature of his malady."

"Yes," said Kwang; "my friend has read my little monograph, and he thought the case so remarkable that with the consent and approval of Dr. Narrowman I brought him to see Patient Stillman in the flesh. I shall get him to talk a little."

"Good," replied Canting; "but you will never cure him. You were quite right in what you once said—Prevention is the only cure. If we had developed our prophylactic system earlier it might have saved him, but he is too old now."

After some preliminary formalities we were taken by one of the warders, who was evidently acquainted with Kwang through his many previous visits, to a room at the end of a long corridor, where we found Mr. Stillman, who greeted us cordially but with old-fashioned dignity. His manner struck me as being very different from that of the modern Meccanians. Clearly be belonged to another generation. The room, which was about twenty feet by ten, was a bed-sitting-room, furnished with one of those contrivances which becomes a bed by night and a false cupboard by day. There was an easy chair with the usual mechanical adjustments, a table, two bedroom chairs, a small sideboard and cupboard, a few other articles of necessity and a shelf of books. There were no bolts or bars or chains—the room suggested a hospital rather than a prison. Mr. Stillman was a fine old man, and, although growing feeble in body, was still vigorous in mind. When seated he held his head erect, and looked us frankly in the face, but with a wistful expression. He had evidently been a good-looking man, but his face bore traces of long suffering. Except that he did not pace about his cell, he reminded me of a caged lion. One of the orderlies brought in a tray of tea for the three of us. Mr. Stillman said what a pleasure it was to see a human being now and then, and, turning to me, explained that, except to Mr. Kwang and the officials and the doctors, he had not spoken to anyone for five years. " Until five years ago," he said, " I was able to do a little work in the gardens, and could converse with my fellow-prisoners—patients, I mean—but only about our work, and in the presence of a warder. Still, that was some relief. Indeed, it was a great relief, for every one of the patients is a kind of brother—otherwise he would not be here. There are only a few hundreds of us left—perhaps a couple of thousands altogether—I don't know. We have about two hundred here, and this is one of the largest hospitals, or prisons, in the country—so at least I was told."

"But why is conversation not permitted?" I said. "To be deprived of conversation must surely aggravate any tendency to mental instability."

"The theory is that communication with our fellow-patients would hinder our recovery," he replied, with a significant smile.

"But what are you supposed to be suffering from?" I said.

"A mental disease known only to the Government of Meccania," he answered. "You must have heard of it. Mr. Kwang knows all about it. The real name for it is 'heresy,' but they call it *Znednettlapseiwz.* I suffer very badly from it and am incurable—at least I hope so," he added bitterly.

At this point Kwang announced that he wished to visit another patient, and that he would leave us together so that I might have a long talk undisturbed. It was evident that he occupied a privileged position, or he would never have been able to have such access to these patients. When he had left the room I did my best to get Mr. Stillman to talk, but I hardly knew how to induce him to tell me his story. I said, "I suppose you are not treated badly, apart from this prohibition about conversing with your fellow-sufferers ? "

" We are fed with the exact amount of food we require," he replied ; " we are clothed—and thank God we do not wear any of the seven uniforms ; and we are decently warm, except sometimes in winter when, I suppose, something goes wrong with the apparatus."

" What ? " I said. " Can any apparatus go wrong in Meccania ? "

" Well," he said, " perhaps the fact is that I want to be warmer than the experts think is necessary. Yes ; that is probably the explanation."

" And for the rest," I said. " Have you no occupation ? How do you spend the time ? "

" In trying to preserve the last remains of my sanity," he answered.

" And by what means ? " I asked gently.

" Chiefly by prayer and meditation," he replied after a short pause.

He used the old-fashioned expressions which I had not heard from the lips of any Meccanian before. " But it is difficult," he went on, " to keep one's faith, cut off from one's fellow-believers."

" But they allow you to attend religious services surely ? " I said.

" The Meccanian State Church keeps a chaplain here, and holds a service every day which is attended by all the officials and a few of the patients ; but you have heard the maxim *Cujus regio ejus religio,* have you not ?" I nodded. "It has acquired a new significance during the last fifty years. I have not attended any of the services since they ceased to be compulsory about ten years ago."

"That sounds very remarkable," I said.

"What does ?"

"It is the first time I have heard of anything *ceasing* to be compulsory in Meccania," I said.

"The fact was that they discovered it had a very bad effect upon the disease. My chief relief now is reading, which is permitted for three hours a day."

"And you are allowed to choose your own books ?"

"As a concession to our mental infirmity," he said, "we have been granted the privilege of reading some of the old authors. It came about in this way. Dr. Weakling, who is in charge of this hospital, is the son of one of my oldest friends—a man who spent several years in this place as a patient. He came in about the same time as I did, but his health gave way and he 'recanted,' or, as they say, he 'recovered.' But while he was here he begged to have a few of the old books to save him from going mad. The authorities refused to let him have any books except those specially provided, and I believe it was this that made him give way. Anyhow he used his influence with his son afterwards, for his son had become one of the leading medical specialists, to obtain for the older patients at any rate a number of the books of the old literature which nobody else wanted to read. He only got the concession through on the ground that it was a psychological experiment. He has had to write a report on the experiment every year since its introduction. That is our greatest positive privilege, but we have a few negative privileges."

"What do you mean exactly?" I said.

"We have no compulsory attendances; we have no forms to fill up; we are not required to keep a diary; we are not required to read the *Monthly Gazette of Instructions*, nor play any part in State ceremonies. Indeed, if I could talk to my friends who are here I should have little to complain of on the score of personal comfort."

"Then why do you speak of the difficulty of preserving your sanity?" I said, rather thoughtlessly, I am afraid.

"Why do you think I am here at all?" he replied, for the first time speaking fiercely. "I could have my liberty to-day if I chose, could I not?" Then he went on, not angrily but more bitterly, "Did I say I could have my liberty? No; that is not true. I could go out of here to-morrow, but I should not be at liberty. I stay here, because here I am only a prisoner—outside I should be a slave. How long have you been in Meccania did you say?"

"About five months," I said.

"And you are free to go back to your own country?"

"Certainly," I said—"at least, I hope so."

"Then go as soon as you can. This is no fit place for human beings. It is a community of slaves, who do not even know they are slaves because they have never tasted liberty, ruled over by a caste of super-criminals who have turned crime into a science."

"I have not heard the ruling classes called criminals before," I said. "I am not sure that I understand what you mean."

"Then you must have been woefully taken in by all this hocus-pocus of law and constitution and patriotism. The whole place is one gigantic prison, and either the people themselves are criminals, or those who put them there must be. There is such a thing as legalised crime. Crime is not merely the breaking of a statute. Murder and rape are crimes, statute or no statute."

"But what are the crimes these rulers of Meccania have committed?" I said.

"In all civilised countries," he replied passionately, "if you steal from a man, if you violate his wife or his daughters, if you kidnap his children, you are a criminal and outlawed from all decent society. These rulers of ours have done worse than that. They have robbed us of everything; we have nothing of our own. They feed us, clothe us, house us—oh no, there is no poverty—every beast of burden in the country is provided with stall and fodder—ay, and harness too; they measure us, weigh us, doctor us, instruct us, drill us, breed from us, experiment on us, protect us, pension us and bury us. Nay, that is not the end; they dissect us and analyse us and use our carcasses for the benefit of Science and the Super-State. I called them a nation. They are not a nation; they are an 'organism.' You have been here five months, you say. You have seen a lot of spectacles, no doubt. You have seen buildings, institutions, organisations, systems, machinery for this and machinery for that, but you have not seen a single human being—unless you have visited our prisons and asylums. You have not been allowed to talk to anybody except 'authorised persons.' You have been instructed by officials. You have read books selected by the Super-State, and written by the Super-State. You have seen plays selected by the Super-State, and heard music selected by the Super-State, and seen pictures selected by the Super-State, and no doubt heard sermons preached by the Super-State.

"Your friend tells me other nations are still free. What drives me to the verge of madness is to think that we, who once were free, are enslaved by bonds of our own making. Can you wonder, after what you have seen—a whole nation consenting to be slaves if only they may make other nations slaves too—that I ask myself sometimes whether this is a real lunatic asylum; whether I am here because I have these terrible hallucinations; whether all that

I think has happened this last fifty years is just a figment of my brain, and that really, if I could only see it, the world is just as it used to be when I was a boy ?"

Presently he became calmer and began to tell me something of his life story.

"Until I was about twelve," he said, "I lived with my parents in one of the old-fashioned parts of Meccania. My father was a well-to-do merchant who had travelled a good deal. He was something of a scholar too, and took interest in art and archæology, and as I, who was his youngest son, gave signs of similar tastes, he took me abroad with him several times. This made a break in my schooling, and although I probably learnt more from these travels, especially as I had the companionship of my father, it was not easy to fit me into the regular system again. So my father decided to send me to some relatives who had settled in Luniland, and a few years after, when I was ready to go to the University of Bridgeford, Cambridge - Oxford he and my mother came to live for a few years in Luniland.

"Up to that time I had taken no interest in politics, but I can distinctly recall now how my father used to lament over the way things were tending. He said it was becoming almost impossible to remain a good citizen. He had always thought himself a sane and sober person, not given to quarrelling, but he found it impossible to attach himself to any of the political parties or cliques in Meccania. He was not a follower of Spotts, who, he said, was a kind of inverted Bludiron, but he disliked still more the politicians and so-called statesmen who were preaching the Meccanian spirit as a new gospel. I think it was his growing uneasiness with politics that caused him to drift gradually into the position of a voluntary exile. But we were very happy. Every year or so I used to go over to Meccania, and in spite of my cosmopolitan education I retained a strong affection for the land of my birth. I was full of its old traditions, and not even the peaceful charms of Bridgeford—an island that seemed like a vision of Utopia—could stifle my passion for the pine forests of Bergerland, our old home in Meccania. When I had finished my course at Bridgeford I had to decide whether I would return to serve my two years in the army. It was a great worry to my mother that I had not, like my brothers, passed the Meccanian examination which reduced the time of service to one year, but I made light of the matter; and although, after my life in Luniland, it was very distasteful to me, I went through my two years as cheerfully as I could. I learnt a great deal from it. I was nicknamed 'the Lunilander,' and was unpopular because I did not share the silly enthusiasm and boasting which at that time was prevalent. I had got out of touch with the youthful life of Meccania, and this two years opened my eyes.

But I will not dwell on that time. At the end of it I joined my father, who had remained in Luniland when he was not travelling. It was time to choose a career. I had little taste for business and I was determined that I would not become an official of any kind, and when I proposed to devote some years to following up the work that my father had planned for himself, but had never been able to carry out, he gave his consent. We had just planned a long archæological tour in Francaria when the great war broke out.

" I shall never forget the state of agitation into which this catastrophe threw him. I was about to return to Meccania in obedience to the instruction I had received, when he begged me not to go back at any cost. He had spent two sleepless nights, and his agony of mind was terrible. What he had feared for years had come to pass. He had thought it would be somehow avoided. He had been watching events very closely for the few weeks before the crisis. The day that war was declared between Luniland and Meccania, he declared his intention of going back to Meccania ; but not to join in the madness of his country. He could not do much ; probably he would not be allowed to do anything, but at any rate he would fight for sanity and right. My mother was eager to go back, but for other reasons. She burst out into a frenzy of abuse of Luniland. She repeated all the lies that I had heard in Meccania about the country in which she had been perfectly happy for years. She called me a coward for not being with my brothers. She said she had always been against my having come to Luniland. I knew she was hysterical, but I could hardly believe my ears. My father stood firm. He insisted on my staying. He said he should regard himself as a murderer if he consented to my going to fight for what he knew to be a monstrous crime. What my mother had said, although of course it pained me, did more to convince me that my father was right than anything he could have said. I had seen already the accounts of the Meccanian crowds shouting for war in a frenzy of martial pride. I had seen also the streets of Lunopolis, full of serious faces, awed by the thought of war and yet never wavering a moment. I had heard my own countrymen jeering at the craven spirit of the Lunilanders. It was a cruel position to be in, and in the years that followed I was tempted sometimes to regret that I had not gone back and sought peace of mind in a soldier's grave. But in my heart I was so revolted by the thought that all this horror was the work of my countrymen that I grew ashamed of being a Meccanian. For the first two years my father wrote to me constantly, and if I had had any doubts of the rightness of my conduct, what he said would have sustained me.

"But that is a long story. All I need say is that it was in those years of suffering and horror that I discovered where my duty lay, and took a vow to follow it. When the war ended I would go back, and if I were the only man left in Meccania I would fight for truth and liberty. It was a quixotic vow, but I was a young man of thirty.

"Well, I came back. I had to wait three years, even after the war was over, until there was an amnesty for such as I. And when I did set foot here again, the cause I had come to fight for was already lost. But I did not know it.

"My father had already spent two years in prison, and was only released in time to die. But through him I knew that there were still some left who felt as we did. The idea of Liberty had been lost. Although the war had been over three years, everybody was still under martial law. The military professed that the country was in danger of a revolution. The newspapers preached the necessity for everybody to be organised to repair the ravages of the war. The socialists said the economic revolution, so long predicted, was accomplishing itself. For a few years we could make no headway. Then things began to settle down a little. The fever seemed to be spending itself. That was the moment when Prince Mechow became Chief Minister of the Interior. Some semblance of constitutional government was restored, and we began to hope for better things. We started a newspaper, and established societies in all the big towns. What we were out for was, first and foremost, political liberty. We had three or four brilliant writers and speakers. But the only papers that would take our articles were a few of the socialist papers which wrote leaders criticising our ideas as 'unscientific,' and the only people who came to our meetings were socialists who used them to speechify about the economic revolution. Then Mechow's reforms began. All education was completely controlled. The Press was bought up, and gradually suppressed. The right of public meeting was curtailed, till it disappeared altogether. The censorship of printing was made complete. New regulations accumulated year by year, and month by month. The seven classes were established. And all the time the socialists went on prating about the economic revolution. Prince Mechow was doing their work, they said. All they would have to do would be to step into his place when he had completed it. A few hundreds of us, scattered in various parts of the country, tried to keep up the struggle. We got into prison several times, but nobody cared a straw for our 'Luniland' party, as they called it. I fell ill, and then I tried to go abroad for a rest. I was arrested for an alleged plot, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment and degradation to the Fifth Class! After that I was forbidden to communicate with my children, for fear of infecting them. As they grew up in their teens, even they grew to look on me as an eccentric. Need I say more? The time came when I had either to recant from all my convictions, or be treated as a person of unsound mind. I came here determined to hold out to the last. What I feared—and I think I feared nothing else—was that some of their diabolical medical experiments would undermine my will. Fortunately I was sent here, where after a time Dr. Weakling—who is at any rate not a scoundrel—has done his best to protect me. He represents a type we have in Meccania—perhaps the most common type of all—a man who conforms to the system because he finds himself in it and part of it, but who is not actively wicked, and who has some good nature left. He regards me and those like me as simple-minded fanatics who are harmless so long as we are only few in number."

"So you think your cause is lost?" I said.

"No," he said quickly, "our cause is not lost. It is Meccania that is lost."

"But is there no hope even for Meccania?"

"There is no hope from within: hope can only come from without."

"That is a hard saying. How can it come from without?"

"Fifty years ago our neighbours—not our enemies, our neighbours—fought for liberty: they set themselves free, but they did not set us free. They said they would make the world safe for democracy."

"Well, did they not do so?" I asked.

He was quiet for a minute. "I wonder if they did," he said. "I wonder if either Liberty or Democracy can be safe so long as there is a Super-State. If a tragedy like this can happen to one nation it can happen to the whole world. Meccania will never become free whilst the Meccanian Spirit remains alive; and Liberty will never be secure until the whole world is free."

He sank back in his chair looking very tired after the excitement of our interview. At this moment a gong sounded. It was the signal for supper, and he got up mechanically to wash his hands in a bowl by the side of his bed-cupboard. Kwang then knocked at the door and came to bid good-bye. We left our 'patient' preparing to cross the quadrangle. It was growing dark, and we could see the lights in the great hall of the hospital. We were just about to walk back to the lodge when Kwang suddenly said, "Come with me." I followed him through a long corridor, and he led the way to a door which opened into the great dining-hall. There we saw, seated at long tables, nearly two hundred old men. They had just begun their evening meal. There was a strange silence, oppressive and almost sinister. There were no servants to wait on them, but some of the more active men handed the dishes, while a couple of warders in green uniforms seemed to be patrolling the room for the purpose of checking all attempts at conversation. But there was not even a whisper. The men did not look sullen or rebellious. Perhaps they had got past that. I could see them interchanging looks of friendly greeting across the room, and no doubt from long practice they had learnt to convey some simple messages by a glance or a smile; but there was an air of quiet courtesy about them, so different from what I had learnt to know as the typical Meccanian manner. I looked at the faces of those nearest me. Many of them might have sat for the portraits of senators, or have served as models for some of those old-fashioned paintings of assemblies of statesmen and ambassadors of bygone centuries. The surroundings were not altogether wanting in dignity. The hall was large and lofty, and although bare—save for the inevitable Imperial portraits which greet one everywhere—was not unsightly. Indeed, the absence of ornament was a relief from the perpetual reminders of the latest phases of Meccanian Art. Governor Canting had apparently been present at the beginning of the meal and was going off to his own dinner. He joined us for a moment. "Do you notice," he said, "how ungracious their expression is? One would think they had never come under the influence of the Meccanian spirit. Their whole bearing is characteristic of their attitude of studied disloyalty. They never even give the salute. It has not been insisted upon because—you know . . ." and he tapped his forehead. "They would not meet with such consideration in many countries, but we have respect for age and infirmity, no matter what provocation we receive."

We left the hall and took our leave of Hospital Governor Canting. As we started on our journey it was dark, and a cool wind was blowing. We could see before us the dull glow of light from the great city in the distance. The road was perfect, and we passed few vehicles of any kind; but we were stopped three times by the police, to whom Kwang showed his pass. As we entered the outer ring we slowed down. Although we were passing along the main roadway only a few persons were to be seen. Here and there near the outer ring in the Business Quarter we passed a few groups of workmen marching in step on their way home. The trams were running, but there was no bustle and no excitement. No boisterous groups of young people filled the streets. No sound of laughter or merry-making fell on our ears. Where were the people? Where were those crowds that make the streets of all cities in the world a spectacle to move the heart of man? This might have been a plague-stricken town, a city of the dead. We passed the great station with its lofty dome, and the towering pile of the Time Department with the great clock above it. As we slowly swung through the great square, the colossal statue of Prince Mechow looked down on us like the grim and menacing image of this city of Power. Was he some evil Genius that had slain the souls of men, leaving their bodies only to inhabit the vast prison-house he had built for them with their own labour ?

Kwang put me down at the hotel and drove on to his rooms. I found a letter awaiting me. It was from my father, and contained painful news. My mother was seriously ill and he urged me to return at once. Early next morning I hastened to visit Kwang—first obtaining permission from the manager of the hotel—and found him busy with his preparations also. " Don't be alarmed," he said, when I told him my news. " Your mother is not ill. At any rate we do not know that she is. I thought it was time for you to be getting ready to leave this country and I had that letter sent. It will be a good reason in the eyes of the 'Authorities.' I go the day after to-morrow. I have a secret mission for the Government to the Chinese Embassy at Prisa " (the capital of Francaria). " I may not return. I may fall suddenly ill."

I expressed some surprise that Kwang, the most privileged stranger in Meccania, the *persona grata* with all the official world, should think it necessary to slip out of the country by a back door, and provide for my sudden departure as well.

" You have been here five months," he said. " I have been here fifteen years. It is always best in this country to take as little risk as possible—consistent with your objectives. A word to the wise. . . . If you have anything that you wish to take out with you, you had better let me have it. You will be examined when you go out as you were when you came in. I do not propose to be examined when I leave. That is why I am going via Prisa on a special mission."

CHAPTER XIII

NEVER AGAIN

I DID not see Kwang again until we met some weeks after, in Prisa. He had begun to suspect that one or two persons in the Foreign Department had guessed the nature of the rôle he had been playing. There was practically no evidence against him, because all the information he had obtained, and it was a great deal, had been furnished to him willingly by the Meccanian Government under the impression that he had become a sort of missionary of Meccanian Culture. All the same, as he observed to me, without arresting him as a spy (a course of procedure which for many reasons would have been inconvenient to the Government) he might have been made the victim of an 'accident.' He could no longer play his part in safety. Anyhow, he succeeded in making his exit in a manner that aroused no suspicion, and he managed to return to his own country a short time afterwards. Consequently I need say no more about Kwang.

My own departure was also rather a tame affair. I had an interview, on the day I received my letter, with Inspector of Foreigners Bulley. Although I knew that the letter had been censored, and I was morally certain its contents had been made known to him, he betrayed no knowledge of the facts. I explained the circumstances and showed him the letter. I asked if the three days' notice could be dispensed with, as I wished to leave at the earliest moment. He said I might possibly leave the day after to-morrow, but not before, as it would be necessary to see that all my affairs were in order before issuing the certificate of absolution as it was called—a certificate which all foreigners must obtain before the issue of the ticket authorising them to be conveyed across the frontier. There would be a charge of £1 for the extra trouble involved. One little difficulty had not occurred to me: there might not be a conveyance to Graves, via Bridgetown, for several days—perhaps not for a week. Inspector Bulley, who had all such matters at his finger-ends, told me there was no conveyance for five days by that route, but that he would arrange for me to travel by another route, via Primburg and Durven, which lay convenient for a journey to Prisa. After that I could either return home direct or go first to Lunopolis.

He was sorry my visit had been cut short almost before my serious study had begun, and hoped I should find it possible to return. He arranged for me to undergo my necessary medical examination on the afternoon of the same day, and this turned out to be almost a formality. Dr. Pincher was much more polite, and much less exacting, than on a former occasion. Clearly the influence of Kwang—for I was now regarded as a sort of protégé of his—was evident in all this. Altogether my exit was made quite pleasant, and I almost began to regret my precipitancy, but when I reflected on what I had to gain by staying longer I saw that Kwang was right. I turned over in my mind what I had seen and learnt during five months. I had seen a provincial town (or some aspects of it), and the capital, under the close supervision of well-informed warders. I had talked to a score of officials and a few professors, and received a vast amount of instruction from them. I had seen a great public ceremony. I had visited a large number of institutions. But I had only got into contact with a single native Meccanian who was free from the influence of the all-pervading Super-State, and this person was in an asylum only accessible by a dangerous ruse. I knew little more of the people, perhaps less, than I could have got from reading a few books; but I had at any rate got an impression of the Meccanian 'System' which no book could have given me. That impression was the most valuable result of my tour, but it seemed unlikely that a further stay would do anything more than deepen it. For unless I were prepared to play the rôle that Kwang had played I was not likely to learn anything the

Meccanian Government did not wish me to learn, and, however much I might be sustained by my curiosity, the actual experience of living in the atmosphere of the Meccanian Super-State was not pleasant.

I said good-bye to my friends at the hotel, and, after an uneventful journey by express train, reached Primburg. Except that it bore a general resemblance to Bridgetown, I can say nothing of it, for we were not permitted to go out of the station whilst waiting for the motor-van to take us across the frontier. I say 'us,' because there were about half a dozen other travellers. The fact that not more than half a dozen persons a week travelled from Mecco to Prisa—for this was the main route to the capital of Francaria—was in itself astounding. Even of these, three looked like persons on official business. At Primburg I was spared the indignity of a further medical examination, as I had already obtained the necessary certificate from Dr. Pincher, but nothing could exempt me from the examination which all foreigners had to submit to in order to ensure that they carried nothing out of the country except by leave of the chief inspector of Foreign Observers. My journal had been entrusted to Kwang, and I had nothing else of any importance. I was thoroughly searched, and my clothes and my baggage were closely examined by an official called the Registrar of Travellers.

Although I had spent a considerable time in

Francaria I had never before seen Durven. There was now no reason for hurrying on to Prisa, so I decided to spend a day there to look round. I had to report myself to the police, owing to the fact that I had arrived from Meccania, but my credentials proving perfectly satisfactory I was at liberty to go where I liked. It was about four o'clock when I stepped out of the police station, and as it was a bright September afternoon there was still time to walk about for some hours before dark. At first, for about an hour, I could hardly help feeling that I was dreaming. Here I was in the old familiar life of Europe again. The streets of the town seemed full of people, some sauntering about and gossiping with their friends, others shop-gazing, others carrying parcels containing their purchases, some making their way home from business, others standing in groups near the theatres. There were tram-cars and omnibuses and all sorts of vehicles jostling in the central part of the town. A little later I saw people streaming out from a popular *matinée*. There were old men selling the first issues of the evening papers, and crying some sensational news which was not of the slightest importance but which somehow seemed good fun.

I was delighted with everything I saw. It was a positive joy not to see any green uniforms, nor any grey uniforms, nor any yellow uniforms. Green and grey and yellow are beautiful colours, but the plain black of the civilian dress of the men in the streets of Durven seemed pleasanter, and the costumes of the women seemed positively beautiful. There were children walking with their mothers, and little urchins racing about in the side streets. I could have laughed with joy at the sight of them: I had seen no children for five months, only little future-Meccanians. There were old women selling flowers. I wondered if they were poor; they looked fat and happy at any rate, and they were free to sell flowers or do anything else they liked. I turned into a café. A little band was playing some rollicking frivolous music that I recognised. I remembered some of my former friends making sarcastic remarks about this kind of music. It was not good music, yet it made me feel like laughing or dancing. There was such a babel of talk I could hardly hear the band. Not that I wanted to! I was quite content to hear the happy voices round me, to watch the simple comedies of human intercourse, and to feel that I was out of prison. I strolled out again. This time I looked at the streets themselves, at the buildings and houses and shops. I dived down a side street or two and found myself by the river among little wharves and docks, all on the tiniest scale. The streets were rather untidy and not too clean; the houses were irregularly built. I was in the old town apparently. As I walked farther I noticed that by far the greater part of the town had been built during the last fifty years or so, yet the place looked as if it were trying to preserve the appearance of age. At another time I should probably have thought the town rather dull and uninteresting, for there was nothing noteworthy about it. If there had once been any genuine mediæval churches or guild halls or places of architectural interest they must have been destroyed, yet I discovered a strange joy and delight in everything I saw.

After dark, when I had dined at the little hotel where I was to sleep that night, I went off at once to the nearest theatre, which happened to be a music hall. I laughed at the turns until people looked at me to see if I were drunk or demented. When they saw I was only a little excited they made good-humoured remarks. They were rather pleased that I should be so easily amused. "Perhaps he has just come out of prison," said one; "no doubt it is rather dull there." "Perhaps he is a friend of one of the actors," said another, "and wants to encourage him." "Perhaps he has come from the land where jokes are prohibited," said a third. "Perhaps he is a deaf man who has recovered his hearing," said another. "Or a blind man who has recovered his sight." "Anyhow, he knows how to enjoy himself." Such were the remarks they made.

When I came out I strolled about the streets until after midnight. It seemed so jolly to be able to go just where one pleased.

In the morning I looked up the trains to Prisa and found that I could reach it in a few hours. So I decided to spend the morning in Durven and go on to Prisa in the afternoon. I strolled into the open market-place. How strange it seemed! People in all sorts of simple costumes were going round to the various stalls picking up one thing here and another there. The usual little comedies of bargaining were going on. There were all sorts of trifles for sale, including toys for children—real toys, not disguised mathematical problems, or exercises in mechanical ingenuity. There were dolls and rattles and hoops and balls and whistles and fishing-rods and marbles and pegtops and dolls' houses and furniture and bricks and a hundred things besides. Then there were gingerbread stalls, ice-cream stalls, cocoa-nut shies, swings and even a little merry-go-round. I felt I should like to ride on that merry-go-round, but as it was early in the forenoon there were only a few children—good heavens! what were children doing here? They ought to have been at school, or at any rate being instructed in the use of Stage II. B toys. I turned into the street where the best shops were. Even the grocers' shops looked interesting. There were goods from all over the world. There were cheeses packed in dainty little cases, and dates in little boxes covered with pictures; tea in packets and canisters representing absurd Chinamen and Hindoo coolies. The clothing shops were full of the latest fashions, although this was a small provincial town;

and very dainty and charming they looked. Then there were antique shops and bric-à-brac shops, print shops and jewellers' shops. I could have spent days wandering about like a child at a fair. I had never realised before that the meanest European town—outside Meccania—is a sort of perennial bazaar.

I tore myself away, and after luncheon took train to Prisa. The confusion and bustle at the stations was delightful; the chatter of the passengers was most entertaining. There were people in shabby clothes and people in smart costumes. There were ticket-collectors and guards in rather dirty-looking uniforms, and an occasional gendarme who looked as if he had come off the comic-opera stage. The villages on the route were like the villages I had seen before in Europe—fragments of bygone ages mixed up with the latest devices in farm buildings and model cottages; churches built in the twelfth century and post offices built in the twentieth; mediæval barns and modern factories. At length we reached Prisa, which needs no description from me.

It looked like an old friend, and I lost no time in resuming the habits I had adopted during my previous stay. I looked up some of my old acquaintances, and we spent days in endless talk about everything under the sun. What a delight it was to read the newspapers, no matter how silly they were! How delightful to hear the latest gossip about the latest political crisis, the latest dramatic success, the latest social scandal, the latest literary quarrel! In a week or two I had almost forgotten the existence of Meccania. I had seen nothing to remind me of it. I began to understand why the people in Francaria and Luniland were so ignorant of that country. Why should they bother their heads about it? It seemed to me now like a bad dream, a nightmare. They were quite right to ignore it, to forget it. And yet, suppose Meccania should startle Europe again? And with a chemical war this time! Would they be able to escape? Or would the Super-Insects finally conquer the human race? I confess I felt some doubt. It seemed not impossible that the nightmare I had escaped from was a doom impending over the whole world. And it is because I could not dismiss this doubt that I have written a faithful account of what I saw and heard in Meccania, the Super-State.

PRINTED BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LTD.
EDINBURGH

A SELECTION OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY METHUEN AND CO. LTD. LONDON

36 ESSEX STREET
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WO_2. Maurice Drake.

Printed by Butler & Tanner, *Frome and London.*

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Author Gregory, Owen

Title Macaria, the super-state.

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